Getting the Green Light

Limble

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Introduction

Maintenance professionals don't need a reminder of just how hard they work. The effort they put in to keep facilities and equipment running smoothly ensures their organizations stay in business and **stops our world from breaking**.

Plenty of executives, however, could use a reminder of everything maintenance does. Maintenance managers and their teams don't typically get the recognition they deserve or enjoy the position within their organizations that they ought to. Decision-makers and peers tend to view the department as a cost center rather than a value driver. At best, they consider investing in maintenance as a last resort when something goes wrong.

It creates a self-perpetuating cycle, one just about any maintenance professional can relate to.

Under-resourced maintenance teams struggle to maintain equipment and their organizations suffer recurring costly breakdowns. During these downtime-causing events, miscommunication and disorganization leave technicians scrambling. As a result, the department's reputation as a cost center persists.

Leadership grows increasingly unlikely to invest in maintenance unless they need to. Within the department, morale suffers. Arguments for additional investments in the maintenance department go unheard or get dismissed. The cycle starts all over again and leaders continue believing that maintenance is just a cost center.

According to a McKinsey report on organizational health and maintenance culture, "They have a point," at least in organizations like the one we just described. The report's authors note that maintenance departments in heavy industries account for 20-40% of operating costs and 30-50% of overall equipment effectiveness losses. Though those numbers suggest that maintenance teams are in a dire situation, they also underline what a huge impact a well-equipped department can make.

When maintenance has the right people, processes, and tools and occupies an appropriate role within the organization it can contribute to significant cost reductions and improvements in productivity, product quality, safety, efficiency, and customer satisfaction.

Changing the definition of maintenance

When maintenance teams are equipped to execute preventive and predictive strategies, they are able to do much more than "maintain." The more data-driven maintenance grows, the more it moves beyond promoting business as usual. Maintenance becomes an organization-wide advocate for proactivity and innovation.

In businesses where maintenance is regarded as a non-value-adding cost center, **the department's reputation primarily comes down to two closely related factors**.

1 Lack of data

"That's the big difference now, we look at data rather than listening to anecdotes."
Sean Diffley, Allagash Brewing Company

Insights into the health of assets, the efficacy of processes, the productivity of the team, and the broader impact of maintenance work give the department a sense of purpose and direction. Moreover, they help maintenance point to a clear return on investment and earn the recognition of other stakeholders across the organization.

Unfortunately, many organizations lack the means to gather these insights, let alone learn from them or leverage them toward meeting strategic goals. Maybe their data is scattered across several disparate systems or they're still relying on pen and paper alone. Such organizations often have no choice but to employ a mostly reactive maintenance strategy.

2 Communication challenges

"We have done a bad job of quantifying, communicating, and selling the value of what we do."
John Rimer, FM360

Without data at their disposal or a prominent position within their organizations, maintenance managers struggle to tell a compelling story about their function and its value. This not only keeps maintenance from securing the investments it needs to keep equipment healthy and operate cost-effectively, but it also affects recruitment and retention. Nobody wants to work on a team or for an organization where they're undervalued or totally uncertain about the value they bring.

Now that we've covered the challenge many maintenance teams face, let's take a look at how maintenance can begin to change the narrative by advocating for itself.

3 STEPS
for getting the green light

Many leaders only start paying attention to maintenance when something terrible happens, like failing an audit or a major piece of equipment breaking. As maintenance professionals, you don't have to wait for a disaster to strike to start advocating on your department's behalf.

You can start to make the case for a new perspective on maintenance today by following a three-step process.

Step 1: Identifying and gathering the relevant data

Start by reviewing your current systems for scheduling, executing, and tracking maintenance tasks. Leaders rarely invest in improving the maintenance department based on hunches and feelings. Any compelling argument for making maintenance more powerful and proactive starts with gathering all the data you can to illustrate both the potential return on investment and the cost of inaction.

Don't have much data? Don't worry. A big gap could prove as compelling as any big number. Just make sure you take the time to think about everything you're missing and how those missed opportunities can help you tell a better story. This may be your first opportunity to illustrate what this lack of visibility really means for your team as well as the ways maintenance challenges produce ripple effects for the organization, its suppliers, and its customers.

Step 2: Presenting a compelling business case

What's in it for me?

Throughout this entire process, one of the keys to success is knowing your audience, and keeping their needs and goals in mind as you make each important decision. That's especially crucial as you deliver your findings and advocate for the value of investing in maintenance.

Think about how you can translate "maintenance-speak" into language that will resonate with decision-makers. How do the department's capabilities directly affect its ability to deliver on organizational goals? Bring these insights into your conversations. With your CFO, for example, you might talk about the ways a more preventive maintenance team can drive down operating costs. A solution provider can help you tailor your messaging for maximum impact.

Step 3: Following through with a successful implementation

Getting the green light isn't the same as crossing the finish line. Your team still has to successfully implement its new technology or onboard its new hires and show off a dependable ROI. Failure to deliver could mean falling back into the same cycles and remaining a mere cost center.

Throughout the subsequent sections of this eBook, we'll look at how maintenance professionals can apply this three-step process to make the case for implementing a CMMS, purchasing new equipment, hiring additional staff, and changing the perception of maintenance across their organizations.

Getting the green light
CMMS

There's no single solution for addressing maintenance's challenges and making it a hero in the eyes of the organization, but introducing a Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS) is an important first step. Find the right platform and your implementation roadmap will effectively function as a guide for addressing challenges like unplanned downtime, avoidable maintenance costs, aging equipment, and workforce shortages.

Getting the green light for a CMMS platform makes it significantly easier to advocate for investments in new equipment or additional resources.

With historical and real-time data at your fingertips and less time spent putting out fires, you'll optimize your program by reducing unplanned downtime, improving asset health, boosting technician productivity, and ultimately reshaping the department's perception as a strategic ally capable of impacting the company's bottom line.

Step 1: Identify and gather the relevant data

Though your current tracking and reporting capabilities may be lacking, collecting whatever data you can about maintenance's current challenges will provide the foundation for your business case.

If you have a software system in place that isn't widely adopted, you may find gaps in data or inaccurate reports. If you don't currently have a dedicated system, there may be a significant lack of visibility into the maintenance organization as a whole. This can help you effectively position the benefits of a CMMS to your leadership team.

- **What metrics does leadership care about?** Winning over executive decision-makers tends to require some careful messaging. Focus on the data that your audience thinks about most. What does their process look like for accessing downtime data and asset cost of ownership? How reliable are the numbers they're able to pull? Discuss the ways a CMMS tracks key metrics in real time and automatically updates executive reports. Emphasize how a CMMS can provide additional visibility to continuously drive improvement and deliver on executive goals.

- **What system do we have for managing work orders and maintenance tasks?** Making the case for a CMMS may mean convincing leadership to abandon an existing system. Highlighting any long-term inefficiencies and recurring frustrations with these systems will illustrate the costs of inaction. Look for tasks that slip through the cracks, team members who've resisted adopting the current system, or gaps in your available data.

Where do our biggest expenses come from? Highlighting the top sources of unnecessary expenses will translate maintenance concerns into problems that resonate with leadership. Maybe a poorly managed spare parts inventory leads to recurring last-minute orders or specific pieces of equipment experience especially high rates of unplanned downtime. Talk to CMMS providers about how a solution will help eliminate these expenses and provide for more cost-effective decision-making and program management moving forward.

In addition to collecting relevant data across your maintenance organization, it's important to research your options and propose a solution in your business case. Look into testimonials from customers in your industry and third-party review sites like G2 or Software Advice.

Live demonstrations from salespeople provide an opportunity to answer questions and learn how the software will address your most pressing challenges. Ask vendors about free trials to see their platforms in action across your facilities.

Step 2: Present a compelling business case

> **"The conversation I pushed for focused on this tool as the backbone of our maintenance department. I said, if we're going to spend money, we should spend it here."**
> John DiBenedetto, Grove City College

By now, you know why the organization needs a CMMS. Now it's time to convince the rest of the organization that making this investment will pay off.

Don't just focus on what frustrates you and your team about business as usual. Make sure to reflect on all the things upper management and executive leaders would gain from access to a CMMS. After all, the maintenance function is often mysterious to higher-ups.

Emphasize the new level of visibility the technology will give them into your operations. From the early implementation stage, leaders will gain real-time insights into your team's activities while tracking critical asset information including downtime, cost of ownership, and depreciation. Inventory and spare parts usage data can provide for more forward-thinking purchasing decisions, eliminating expedited shipping costs and enabling procurement and supply chain management functions to set better budgets.

A CMMS simplifies enforcing compliance with both internal and industry-wide standards by ensuring tasks are completed appropriately. With a few clicks, any authorized user can access detailed asset histories and maintenance logs in anticipation of audits.
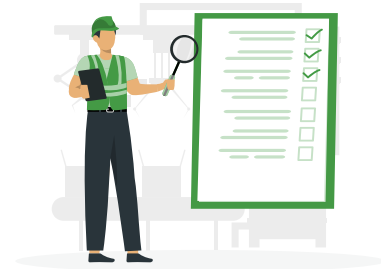
> **Remember:** A lack of internal support and alignment is one of the top reasons CMMS implementations fail or come up short.

Step 3: Follow through with a successful implementation

Sinking time and effort into an unsuccessful solution is sure to land maintenance right back where it started. That's all the more reason to do your research and pick a user-friendly solution with a best-in-class customer support team.

Tips for a successful implementation:

Get every stakeholder on board early:
This one should sound familiar. You'll face less resistance to change if you get everybody on the same page during the initial planning and scoping phase of the project.

Talk to your provider about their support model:
When you're reviewing CMMS vendors make sure to ask the contenders about how they'll support your team through implementation and work to promote end-user adoption.

Consider a phased rollout:
If you're concerned about user adoption or need to show a clear ROI on an especially short timeline, a preliminary implementation can help smooth the transition to data-driven, proactive maintenance. Consider starting with a small number of especially critical assets or a single one of your facilities. From there, your team can carry out intermediate and advanced implementation phases.

Once you've gotten this initial green light and made it through CMMS implementation, you'll probably have earned advocates [for life](#).

Here's how Stephanie McKenna, Assistant Manager for Protection Services for Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, describes post-CMMS implementation life:

> **"It is really incredible to see where we're using our budgets, our time, and resources. Some of our biggest nay-sayers immediately became champions of the platform. We watched them go from 'this is a waste of time' to 'I can't live without this."**

As the benefits of a CMMS platform and the power of a tech-enabled maintenance department multiply, they'll become undeniable. You'll find it easier than ever to argue on the department's behalf and get the green light for new resources and initiatives.

Getting the green light
Equipment

When Limble surveyed more than 250 maintenance and facilities management professionals, more than half agreed that aging equipment is a top-three problem. Nobody knows the ins and outs of your organization's asset portfolio better than the employees who service your equipment each day, but it's tough to make a case for new equipment or much-needed repairs with word of mouth alone.

Step 1: Identifying and gathering the relevant data

The life of a maintenance professional can be a frustrating one, particularly when the department struggles to advocate for itself or showcase the benefits of its work. Maybe you've watched an outdated or faulty piece of equipment eat up your team's time or cause excessive downtime. You know it needs replacing, they know it needs replacing, but leadership won't listen up unless you can point to hard data.

Key metrics for making this argument fall into two categories, asset history and maintenance history.

Asset data

Asset data will show you the financial implications of unplanned downtime and increased repairs with metrics including:

- Total downtime and unplanned downtime
- Production revenue lost per hour of downtime
- Excess consumable parts spend

Maintenance history

Your historical maintenance logs will show you the labor costs associated with maintaining a specific piece of equipment or system. Look at metrics including:

- Total unplanned work orders
- Hours spent on repairs
- Overtime costs

To contextualize this information for maximum impact, consider collecting benchmark data from higher-performing assets. The juxtaposition could make it clear just how much extra time and money you're spending on your less reliable equipment.

Step 2: Present a compelling business case

If repair vs. replace discussions are dragging on, the detailed asset histories collected within a CMMS can bring things to a close with a smart, data-driven decision. Limble customers describe using the platform to advocate for replacing malfunctioning equipment as well as taking a closer look at assets to get them back in working condition.

At Aztec Construction Group, the maintenance crew was often forced to advocate for equipment repairs and replacements based on anecdotal evidence alone. They consistently spent hours and hours each week maintaining equipment that was not fit for use. That's not to mention the expense, Shop Manager Shelton Barbee reported devoting more than $100,000 to repair an asset that was only operational for two months out of the year. With Limble, he and the rest of his team no longer struggle to illustrate their daily frustrations to managers. They can conduct data-driven assessments of asset health to make cost-effective decisions across their facilities.

"Limble helps the maintenance crew translate their message for the leadership team to make quicker, smarter decisions. There's no more risk of making big purchases based on anecdotal information."
Samantha Handy, Aztec Construction Group

Step 3: Follow through with successful implementation

Once you've received approval for the new piece of equipment, you'll want to plan for the installation. Proper installation is essential for minimizing disruption to your production processes and maximizing the performance and longevity of your assets. Guides to installation should include detailed step-by-step processes as well as information on any tools your team will need to install, align, and level your new asset.

Introducing equipment to your CMMS provides easy access to maintenance histories, health data, and key documents for managing each asset throughout its lifecycle.

Include warranty information, equipment manuals, and establish new preventive maintenance schedules and procedures based on the manufacturer's recommendations. If you run into any issues while a given asset is still covered by a warranty, you'll have no trouble pulling the necessary historical data to submit a claim.

Getting the green light
Talent

Widespread workforce shortages are hitting maintenance departments especially hard. Veteran employees are saying goodbye and leaving behind huge organizational knowledge gaps. More than half of respondents to Limble's 2024 survey agreed that staffing challenges are a top concern.

As a Maintenance Manager, you know when your team is short-staffed, but upper management may not always be on board with backfilling rolls or investing in additional personnel. CMMS platforms support talent management in a number of ways. In addition to helping organizations optimize labor spend with performance management insights they can help you make the case for increasing headcount.

Step 1:
Identify and gather the relevant data

Key metrics to consider when advocating for a new employee include workload, maintenance backlog, and overtime costs. Leverage CMMS data to determine whether your backlog is growing, view trends into how many tasks are being completed, calculate overtime costs, and estimate the impact an additional hire would have on your overall workload and costs.

As you dig into maintenance performance, pay attention to metrics like these:

- Average time to start a task
- Planned maintenance percentage
- Overtime costs
- On-time vs. overdue task completion
- Maintenance backlog
  (tasks created vs. tasks completed)

A deep dive into performance data can help you identify the root cause of resource allocation and workload challenges. If specific teams or employees tend to struggle, for example, you might consider on-the-job training or improvements to process documentation.

If the volume of open tasks and overtime costs are increasing, it may suggest there is more work than the current team is equipped to handle and justify adding an additional employee.

Step 2: Present a compelling business case

With hard data at your fingertips, it's simple to make the case that your team needs additional support. If maintenance is used to operating in a black box, this may be the first time executive leaders are getting a clear look at the challenges insufficient resources can lead to. You should highlight the number of tasks being left incomplete as well as any avoidable downtime caused by delayed maintenance.

Point out both the hard and soft costs associated with delays. In addition to revenue losses, for example, you might emphasize the burnout your overworked employees experience. Failing to address these feelings proactively could mean seeing veteran team members depart for roles where they'll feel more empowered and appreciated.

Step 3: Follow through with a successful implementation

Once you've secured approval to hire an additional staff member, it's important to ensure they're prepared for success and to follow up with management to show the impact of your new talent investment. Present updated metrics that show how your backlog is shrinking and more tasks are getting completed on time. Keep an eye on your planned maintenance percentage – additional capacity should enable your team to complete more preventive maintenance.

Maintenance manager at Allagash Brewing Company, Ryan Fisher, was able to demonstrate that a vacant role should be backfilled by comparing the costs of a new full-time hire to the potential productivity losses of leaving a position unfilled. While executives had previously hesitated to re-staff the role, they couldn't deny maintenance's argument once they saw the tasks that would be sacrificed.

"It felt good for [the leadership team], too, because they can be sure they aren't wasting money on a position that isn't needed," explained Ryan.

Today, they have successfully backfilled the role and are operating efficiently and productively.

From cost center to value driver

Improving maintenance's standing within the organization improves the daily lives of everyone in the department as well as everyone they work with.

A new position will grant maintenance a new sense of purpose. By eliminating frustrations and automating away tedium, CMMS platforms like Limble empower technicians and operators to devote their attention to high-value initiatives and professional development. They can go beyond the typical definition of maintenance and grow into multi-functional experts capable of driving businesses through an exciting new era.

> **"I've seen our technicians grow from a day-to-day job to a career where they bring value and where they're recognized."**
> Samantha Handy, Aztec Construction

As a Maintenance Manager, you can focus less on fighting fires and more on optimizing your maintenance program for the long term:

1   **Leverage historical data to identify opportunities for new or better maintenance schedules to reduce equipment downtime.**

2   **Look for excessive maintenance and adjust your PM frequencies accordingly.**

3   **Track and forecast spare parts usage to avoid costly last-minute purchases and downtime caused by out-of-stock critical spares.**

4   **Reduce inventory spend by purchasing the right quantity of parts in bulk ahead of time.**

> **All of this impacts your company's bottom line and positions you and your team as important value drivers for the larger organization.**

Here's just one more example of how a CMMS can offer insights that empower maintenance and elevate it within the organization.

Thanks to Limble, the team at Allagash has reduced their reliance on third-party vendors and brought more of their maintenance work in-house. They've also dramatically improved the accuracy and accessibility of their records to improve inventory management. Following a recent breakdown, an Allagash mechanic took control of completing the repair. Thanks to detailed purchasing records, the mechanic was able to determine that a vendor had sent them an incorrect part and overcharged them more than 900%. With the documentation to execute a refund, Allagash received the correct part and saved thousands. What other stakeholders might consider just nuts and bolts on a shelf, in fact, constitute a significant investment and a potential source of savings. A CMMS gives maintenance pros the tools they need to prove it and make themselves heroes in the eyes of executives.

As you drive more and more value for your organization, it's important to continue communicating this to upper management, ensuring the company as a whole has visibility into the impact your team is having on the company's bottom line. Sending out a monthly executive report with some of the key metrics you've started tracking can help you showcase the improvements you're making.

Be sure to highlight big wins for the maintenance team and get the larger organization excited about celebrating all the hard work you're doing.

Need help getting the green light?

At Limble, we're not just tech providers. We're believers in the impressive potential of well-equipped maintenance teams and advocates for the function. We built Limble with the help of insights from hundreds of industry professionals just like you. Over the years, we've continued to add new features and optimize our platform to suit the daily needs of maintenance teams and help them overcome persistent challenges.

Schedule a conversation with our team to learn more about how we can help you advocate on maintenance's behalf, achieve your goals, and build a department capable of serving as a trusted strategic partner.