



## 4 Tips for Preserving Maintenance Skills & Maximizing Asset Utilization

Limited skilled worker availability, skills development and new technologies could have a major impact on asset utilization in coming years. Here are some steps that manufacturing leaders can take to preserve the skills and continuity of their maintenance teams.

Helping manufacturers reduce equipment setup times to improve throughput, enhance flexibility and increase asset utilization has been a core TBM service offering for decades. Most recently, our article, "[Four Ways to Uncover Hidden Capacity](#)", in Food Manufacturing, offered some detailed setup reduction advice to food manufacturers, advice which can easily be applied to manufacturers in many other sectors. That article explored some of the tactical steps that operations managers can take on production lines to reduce machine changeover times and maximize asset utilization.

A recent [interview with Wes Dean](#), Senior Asset Care Systems Engineer for

MillerCoors, explores some of the higher level issues that could have a major impact on asset utilization in coming years. Odds are, they've already started to have an impact on your business. The trends that Dean highlights revolve around employee availability, skills development and new technology.

They include, to paraphrase:

- Aging production equipment that needs to be maintained and replaced
- New machines increasingly run by computer controls
- The massive pending retirement of senior maintenance staff from the U.S. workforce
- Younger workers moving between jobs more rapidly
- A lack of maintenance training programs
- A growing need for data analytics capabilities.

It's a daunting list. Of course, coming up with a solution to the dwindling supply of skilled maintenance workers—and skilled manufacturing workers in general—extends beyond the four walls of any single company. Looking at future job vacancies, maintenance skill training as well as basic electrical and mechanical knowledge could be taught in more trade schools or junior colleges, as Dean points out.

Internally, here are four steps that manufacturing leaders can take to preserve the skills and continuity of their maintenance teams:

1. Focus everyone on a core set of maintenance performance metrics and goals.
2. Push a wider adoption of autonomous, preventive, and predictive maintenance practices.
3. Develop standards, reinforced through audits, which maintain best practices.
4. Underwrite more learning opportunities both for skills development and to support employee retention efforts.

Because of the importance of maintaining equipment uptimes and asset utilization levels, asset management is like any other strategic priority. As such, it will have to capture sufficient leadership attention for these challenges to be managed successfully.





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