

Is your budget tight? Will you have the funds to make it through the school year?

I recommend a journey to a place called ... EXCELLENCE. Those in the Maintenance and Operations arena are often jerked to and fro when it is budget time or when a budget crunch hits.

There are two major parts to your business; PRODUCTION, and PRODUCTION CAPABILITY. Production is doing the work. Production Capability includes all the tools involved in helping you do the work efficiently, now and in the future. Here is the sad truth I have witnessed at a number of school districts. They have allowed production capability to slip.

When a district doesn't live in a place called EXCELLENCE, it typically lives in a place called STRUGGLING. What does STRUGGLING look like? Tight budgets, constantly being asked to do more, (with what feels like a lack of staff), and all the extras were cut out of your budget a long time ago. At first glance it just looks like there is not enough money to fulfill the role you have been given. It seems hopeless.

Some districts who are living in that place called STRUGGLING tell me they cannot afford to benchmark; "there is no money in the budget". Your choice is to do nothing, or do something. We have done benchmarking and assessments on some districts who are struggling. Here's what we have found:

- Utility costs way higher than their peers.
- Building automation systems that are inoperative or in manual.
- No capital planning or replacement programs in place.
- No automated planning and execution tools.
- No, or very few, craft or supervision training programs.
- No job descriptions or outdated ones.
- No accountability or any systems to insure accountability.
- Runaway contractor costs.
- High overtime, absenteeism, and attrition rates.
- No goal or measurement systems in place.
- Equipment that is not suited for the task at hand.
- Communication with customers in either non-existent or strained.
- A culture of being redirected to today's crisis and tomorrow we will be redirected to tomorrow's crisis.
- Each level of the organization is on a different page. No plan. No communication. No consistency between the objectives and the resources.
- Very little collaboration and lots of blame and politics.

Does that describe where you live? If so, production capability needs to be rebuilt. Production will continue to suffer until production capability gets rebuilt.

Production capability includes good leadership. It includes a trained work force. It also includes proper tools to do the work and proper tools to plan, schedule, communicate, and follow-up. It includes strategic efforts like benchmarking, goal setting and measurement, process evaluation, and process redesign. It involves good organizational design, job descriptions, proper planning and assignment of tasks, adequate tools, good supervision, high standards, proper accountability, and good follow-up.

If you are tired of STRUGGLING, and want to take the journey to EXCELLENCE; start with some strategic initiatives. Get some help. Benchmark your current performance against leading districts, and then do follow-up assessments on your areas of weakness. Set a vision for your team and get unified on a plan. Set some measurable goals. Defend your production capability resources and dollars – they are your lifeline on the road to EXCELLENCE.

Guess what?

- At EXCELLENCE, your cost structure is lower than at STRUGGLING.
- At EXCELLENCE, your utility usage is lower than at STRUGGLING.
- At EXCELLENCE, the morale is better than at STRUGGLING.
- At EXCELLENCE, employee retention is better than at STRUGGLING.
- At EXCELLENCE, student and community satisfaction is higher than at STRUGGLING.

This isn't Pollyanna thinking – this has been proven in businesses and organizations around the world. Excellent results are always preceded by excellent plans, processes, policies, and proper execution. We encourage you to take the first steps. Enjoy the journey to EXCELLENCE.