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Stockroom comments on accuracy

What is the most significant area of loss of mechanic productivity in a fleet garage (or any maintenance facility)?
Hint: The same thing is the largest cost area for a fleet after labor and fuel. If you answered spare parts, give yourself a star.

I just taught a course on inventory and stock room management in beautiful Louisiana, and they reminded me of the importance of having the right parts available at the right time. Huge amounts of time are lost due to the inability to find specific parts, having the parts on the system but not on the shelf, or not having the right parts. This inability is not a parts issue but rather an issue in the storeroom or warehouse where the parts are kept.



How to communicate the importance of accurate records

A couple of lessons could be learned from any storeroom, starting with the importance of accurate records. Everyone agrees with the importance of precise records but disagrees with how to achieve the goal. Here's my take on achieving the goal:

- ❑ Be sure everyone knows why accurate records are essential.
- ❑ Encourage people to take responsibility for their part of the process.
- ❑ Be sure everyone knows who is accountable for different aspects of the process.
- ❑ Provide physical security.
- ❑ Provide training in procedures for storeroom personnel and your customers
- ❑ Conduct motivational talks from different parties
- ❑ Provide the tools to make doing the right thing the easiest thing.
- ❑ Establish goals and measures and report on progress **IN PUBLIC**
- ❑ **Management must have the willpower to make it so!**

Mistakes are always going to happen. The common causes need to be discussed by people who can make a difference and treat (or fix). The critical question is who makes a difference. It turns out that the stockroom clerks can make a difference (if there are any) and the mechanics (if they pick their parts).

Can we focus and see the areas where mistakes commonly happen? Have you ever considered all the places where errors can mess up your inventory numbers?

- ❑ Parts were removed without paperwork (maybe they were in a hurry or some other excuse)
- ❑ Parts are removed, and the paperwork is mismarked (wrong part number or wrong quantity)
- ❑ Missing shipping receiving documents (they are easy to stuff somewhere)
- ❑ The wrong part was sent in and missed in receiving (shelved god knows where)
- ❑ Rebuildable parts are handled differently each time (are cores a special case –every time?)
- ❑ Confusion in units of measure pounds, ounces, kilograms, and grams (who can keep them all straight).
- ❑ Marking the wrong SKU (part number) on an incoming part
- ❑ Errors in transcription (like flipping numbers)
- ❑ Returns improperly accounted for (re-shelved –not entered back into the system)
- ❑ One part blocks the sight of another (when you are looking or counting)
- ❑ Pilferage, theft (certain things get legs –try holding onto AA batteries during the holidays!)
- ❑ Toolbox and rat hole inventory (maintenance workers like to keep their mini-stockroom)

Project: Initiate a discussion of one or more areas where mistakes can be made. See if the parties involved can design a simple process to fix the problem. Discuss a different set of items a month later and fix them. Create a metric (a measurement) that tracks progress and makes the metric public.

Keep it up until you are done with the list. Be sure to add items to the list that are unique to your operation.

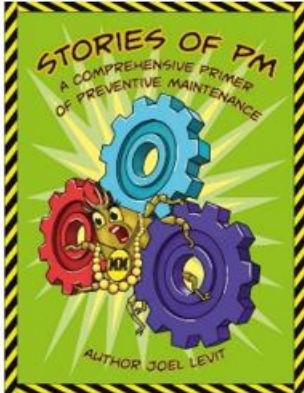
Parting shot

Another thing that struck me was the complexity of changing items on the stock list. While having the discussion described above, try spending a session looking at all the storeroom business processes.

If you want to see something interesting, get a sheet of quad paper (if they still sell it- or use Visio) and take a business process like Return surplus items to stock or the process to agree to standardize on one item (such as a particular bearing). Draw all the steps, authorizations, conversations, files created or changed, and forms to be filled out to accomplish the objective. In our class, adding an item to stock requires 20 steps and a plant manager's signature!

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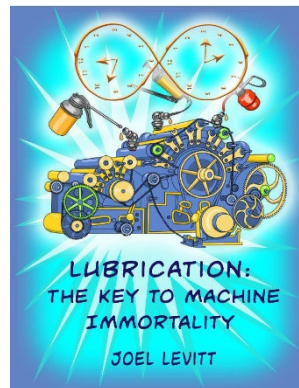
Reliability and fundamentals



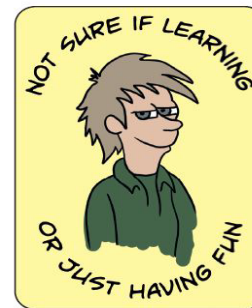
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