



Continuous improvement in performance, operational excellence

Facility and site managers are always looking for time and money. By increasing productivity, enhancing safety performance and reducing operating costs, these managers can protect and improve their margins even in the current economic climate. And the right multiservice provider is a critical piece of this continuous improvement equation.

Continuous improvement typically begins with discovery — identifying areas of waste. From better planning and scheduling to streamlining processes and workflows to motivating employees to improve safety and performance, there are numerous components that can be evaluated as a starting point.

Safety, of course, will always be first and foremost. A company that has a strong safety culture will experience fewer at-risk behaviors, lower accident rates, and less absenteeism and turnover. Ultimately this leads to more engaged employees, who in turn support improved productivity. Safety and productivity go hand in hand; a safer site will always be a more productive site and vice versa.

Building a safety culture

To be effective, safety must be supported and reinforced throughout an organization — from executive leadership down to the employees in the field, at every location and on each jobsite. Ownership, personal responsibility and accountability are key components in building a culture of safety and must be continually reinforced through ongoing communication.

These components also should be matched with a behavior-based safety program, which includes observing and coaching employees on correct safety behaviors to help stop accidents before they happen. In addition, leading as well as lagging indicators of safety should be identified, defined and measured. Leading indicators can be used to drive activities to prevent incidents while fostering a strong safety culture.

Other tools that reinforce a culture of safety include project planning and hazard analysis. Assessments, site safety plans and hazard analyses are designed to recognize potential problems and eliminate or mitigate them prior to the start of any job.

The evidence is extremely clear: A strong culture of safety has a broad reach, affecting operations, processes, employee morale and customer relations. Assessing and reinforcing a positive safety culture must be an important focus for your company.

Partnering with your multiservice provider

Products and services related to access, insulation and coatings should also be assessed, analyzed and evaluated as part of any continuous improvement initiative. Each of these services has a huge impact on safety and productivity. Analyzing and fine-tuning your approach toward access, insulation and coatings could dramatically increase safety as well as save hundreds of thousands of dollars and significant time.

Partnering with an experienced multiservice company can provide a formidable edge in this effort. Using a bottom-up approach, a multiservice provider that has the processes and craftspeople with years of experience and hands-on knowledge can help you save significantly. The best logistic improvements often come from these expert craftspeople, who work out in the field every day.

Take coatings. The array of coatings products available today is larger and more innovative than ever before. From coatings that deliver a superior life cycle and better performance to insulating options that help save energy or are better for different environments, there are numerous new products on the market even when compared to just three years ago.

With all of these innovations and improvements in coatings, simply using whatever products were used the last time doesn't add up. This is when an experienced multiservice provider that's also an approved coatings material supplier can have a big impact. There is no way facility and site managers can be familiar with all the coating options on the market or select the optimum solution for their unique projects. However, a knowledgeable multiservice provider with experienced craftspeople that is also an approved coatings supplier can guide you through the maze of options.

Saving with asset management

Coatings asset management programs can also be used to save time and money. Being proactive rather than reactive regarding asset management can extend the life of coatings, reduce unanticipated downtime and increase safety. For example, instead of having to completely blast and paint facility assets every 10 to 15 years, an asset management program can help you stretch the timetable to 20 or 25 years. In fact, good asset management will pay for itself over time, and it's much easier to plan, budget and pay for a multiyear program than be hit with a major unexpected renovation or repair project.

The bottom line: A good asset management program is much more than a nice

idea. It's become a necessity. Or put another way, if you do not have an asset management program set up with your multiservice provider, you are losing money.

Reducing energy costs

The right insulation for a facility will also pay huge dividends and provide a significant return on your investment.

New insulation will be an investment on the front-end. But if you make your investment back within just six months of reduced energy costs and after that the savings go directly to your bottom line, then any investment in new insulation would certainly be more than worthwhile. Plus, keep in mind insulation — depending on environment and type of service — typically lasts for as many as 20 years, which is a lot of time for these savings to multiply!

Again, this is where an experienced multiservice partner, one that is familiar with all forms of insulation — from thermal to cryogenic to acoustical — and has the most up-to-date application and installation methods, can make a big difference. There are so many products and solutions — from pipe cover to board and block to spray and blanket — that can be utilized to address thermal challenges.

An energy appraisal is a great way to start. During an energy appraisal, a National Insulation Association-certified appraiser will examine piping and process systems, equipment, energy usage and previous energy bills. After a thorough assessment, the appraiser will deliver a report that summarizes findings and provides specific recommendations — actions you can take, a budget with line-by-line costs for any recommendations, anticipated savings in operational expenses per month, and most importantly a date when you can expect to recoup the costs of any investments in insulation and energy improvements to help you reduce operational expenses and increase profits.

In some cases, of course, a report may confirm a facility is doing everything right from an energy perspective — that all its piping systems and equipment are insulated to achieve maximum thermal efficiency. In other cases, an appraisal may demonstrate an enormous potential for savings and suggest measurable recommendations.

In addition, companies can often cut costs associated with greenhouse gas emissions as a result of improvements in insulation, which are calculated in the report the energy appraiser will provide. By paying fewer carbon credits, companies can rack up even more savings.

If you decide you want to schedule an energy appraisal, work with someone who is knowledgeable about the insulation

systems and materials on the market and can make an informed recommendation. Insulation is critical to energy efficiency, and there are almost unlimited options on the market today. You will also want to hire someone who has access to all the major types and providers, so you can source the best option.

Increasing the energy efficiency of your facility will add to its value. On average, for every dollar spent in energy efficiency improvements, the value of a facility increases.

Improving productivity through access

Then there's access and scaffolding. With all of the products on the market today — including scaffolding, suspended access, and motorized and weather protection systems — there is almost always more than one way to safely approach access. And many times the access and scaffold solution you choose can have a significant impact on safety, cost and schedule, because scaffolders are often the first to arrive at and the last to leave any jobsite.

Safe, high-efficiency access solutions start with expert engineering and up-to-date design programs. Selecting the best equipment for a specific application and minimizing components can also lead to improved safety, reduced labor costs and shorter timetables. Scaffolding is not the only option when it comes to designing an access solution; sometimes suspended access systems and motorized equipment can be used to safely cut days and weeks off of project schedules.

Finally, there's project management. Unanticipated delays due to equipment sourcing or delivery problems and poor project management are unacceptable. Even the best products can only help if they will be on-site when they are needed. Workforce planning is of critical importance. Good project management should also include tracking and sharing progress in real time. By monitoring and measuring key performance indicators, priorities can be maintained and a defined critical path can be followed.

Access, insulation, coatings and asset management all offer opportunities to save millions in lower operational costs, decreased downtime, improved safety and fewer budget surprises. It comes down to being proactive rather than reactive and working with your multiservice provider to approach each project with an open mind, a willingness to be innovative and a commitment to continually improve.

For more information, visit www.safwaygroup.com or call (800) 558-4772. ●