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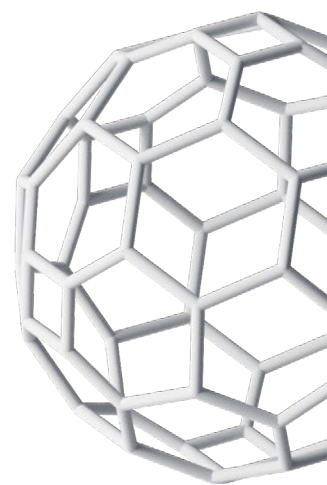
Do You Fit the Bill?

10 Skills of Successful Maintenance Managers



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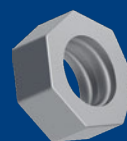


Introduction

As a maintenance and reliability professional, you have technical training, a basic knowledge of asset management principles, technical knowledge of the equipment you manage, and practical experience from years working in the field. These are the hard skills needed to perform your job.

However, technical education and training will only give you some of the skills you need to manage a team of maintenance professionals effectively. In addition to these hard skills, you need a particular set of soft skills to excel in your role. These skills will lead to greater productivity and efficiency across the maintenance team.

More importantly, they will lead to less stress, greater job satisfaction, and ongoing career achievement. This eBook will cover the essential soft skills you need to excel, illustrated by excerpts from our subject matter experts. Please keep reading to learn more about our subject matter experts and what perspectives they bring to this eBook.



A Little About Our Subject Matter Experts

This eBook draws upon the vast knowledge and experience of some of Fiix® by Rockwell Automation's leading subject matter experts, who have spent years perfecting the craft of operational efficiency, automation, and continuous improvement.

Read about them below:



Jason Afara

Director, Solutions Consultants | Fiix by Rockwell Automation

Jason brings over 8+ years of experience in operations and maintenance. He has worked as a production supervisor, maintenance planner, maintenance supervisor, capital projects manager, and maintenance manager. At Fiix software, he has helped customers with various projects, from improving reporting to optimizing their work order process and continuous maintenance improvement.



Mike Cooper

Solutions Consultant, Fiix by Rockwell Automation

Mike brings over 20+ years of experience in maintenance, process reliability and automation to his current role, where he focuses on PLC (Programmable Logic Controller) integrations. He troubleshoots advanced customer issues and assists with continuously improving and developing the Fiix Asset Risk Predictor. Mike believes in fully utilizing automation and the Fiix CMMS (Computerized Maintenance Management System) to offload tedious tasks and enable decision-makers to make more data-driven decisions.



Roopali Bagaria

Implementation Manager, Fiix by Rockwell Automation

Before moving to the world of maintenance software, Roopali spent over 6+ years in the accounting and technology industry, earning her CPA along the way. After spending several years with Fiix software, she has worked with hundreds of clients, providing professional services, including implementation, consulting, data migration, and end-user training.

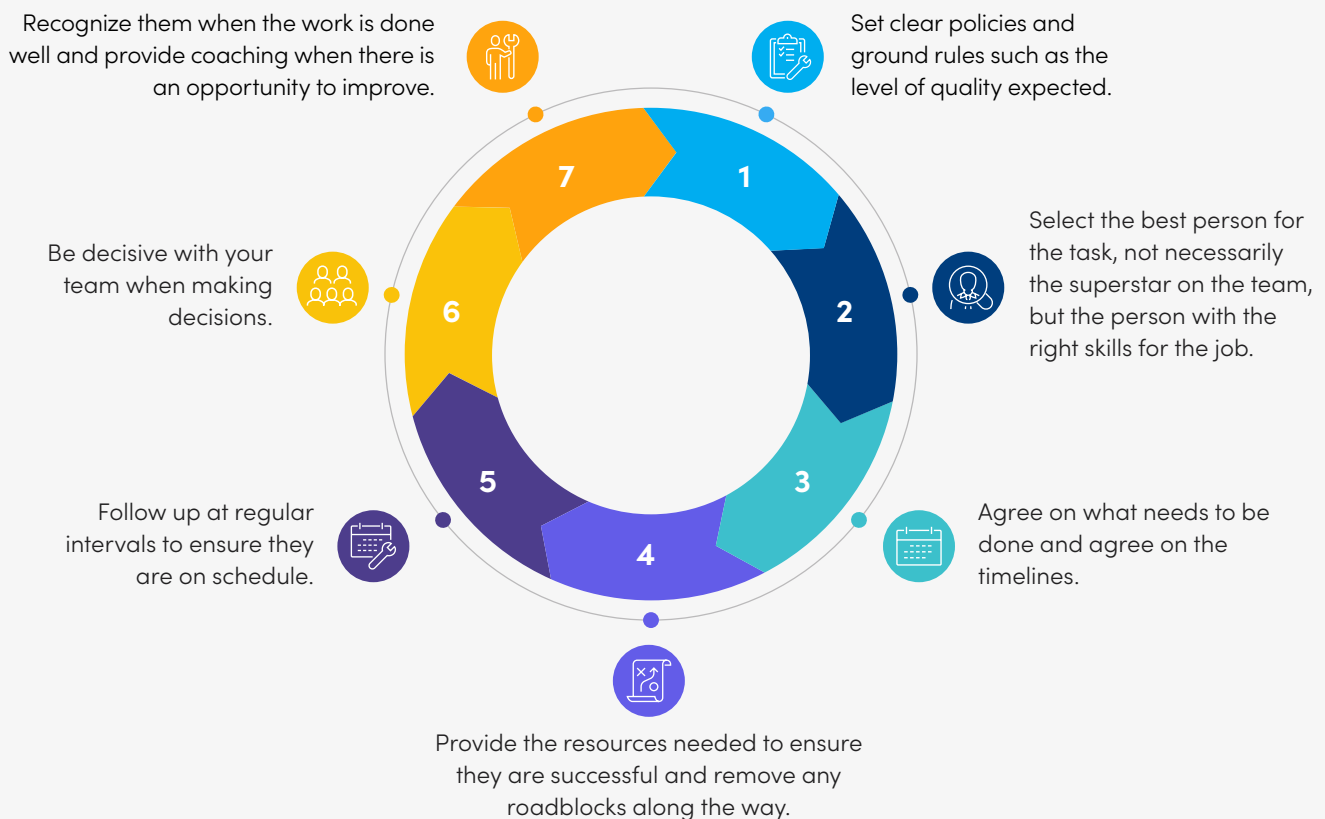
Leadership Skills

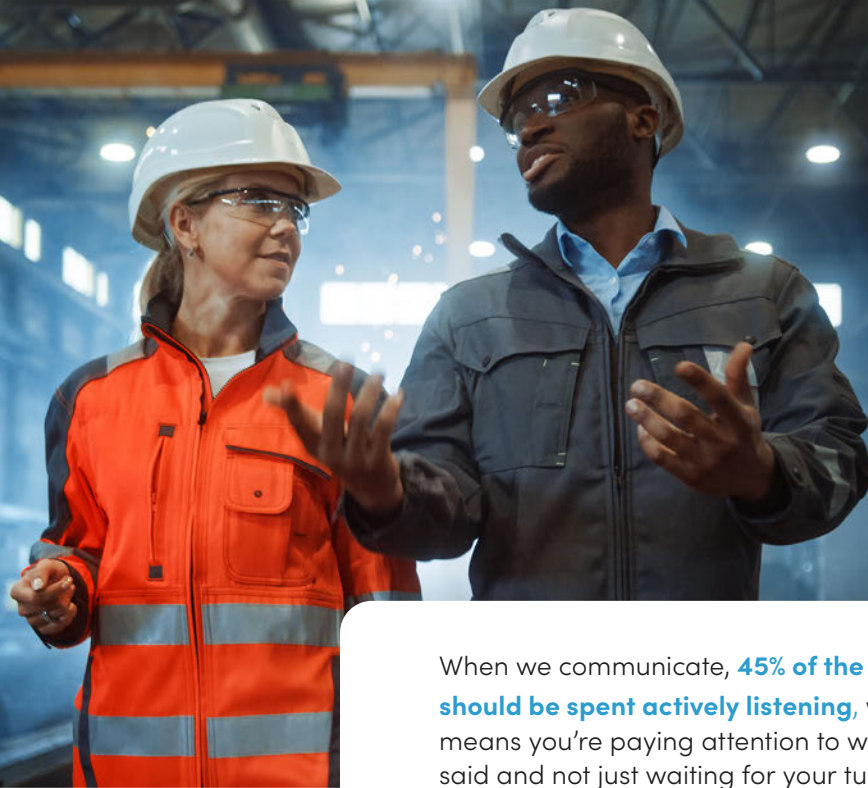
To be a successful maintenance manager, you need to demonstrate leadership ability. You must be self-motivated, organized, trustworthy, empathetic, and optimistic. A true leader has a clear vision of where they want the maintenance team to go and sets a positive example for others. Your motivation and confidence must rub off on the team and create a healthy and productive work environment.

According to Mike Cooper, "Having leadership skills means continuing to drive a maintenance workforce knowing that there's never any praise, and there come the times when you need to keep everyone's motivation, head up, and positivity in a situation where there's none."

Leadership is also about getting a job with the help of others. Delegating work to subordinates is an important management function; otherwise, nothing gets done. Delegation frees up precious time so the manager can focus on high-value activities. Great leaders get things done by inspiring and empowering others to do great work for them. They foster motivation by giving subordinates autonomy to do the job, creating a supportive environment, and providing recognition when the job is done well.

Follow this process to ensure the job gets done correctly:





When we communicate, **45% of the time should be spent actively listening**, which means you're paying attention to what is being said and not just waiting for your turn to speak.

Interpersonal Skills

One of the most important life skills is communicating clearly and concisely with those around you. Having good interpersonal skills means that other people are more likely to see you as calm yet assertive, and employers tend to promote employees with good interpersonal skills, as they can communicate effectively and maintain good relations with colleagues and customers. Having excellent interpersonal skills will help maximize the value of each interaction to everyone's benefit. Maintenance managers negotiate daily with subordinates, management, suppliers, contractors, machine operators, and project managers—so practical interpersonal skills are crucial to their day-to-day jobs.

Mike shares that interpersonal skills are incredibly important for success in a maintenance environment. He adds, "...because the dynamics change between technicians. You need to manage different personalities, different types of people with different communication styles, and it's to a manager's benefit to understand what motivates them daily."

One of the best ways to develop your interpersonal skills is to practice active listening. Active listening is when you hear what someone is saying and understand their thoughts and feelings. It's a mindful and thoughtful interaction between people. Communicating calmly and addressing concerns clearly is essential, for example: "When you said X, my understanding is Y." This is an excellent interpersonal approach when addressing a problem.

It's important to realize that listening is not the same as hearing. When we communicate, 45% of the time should be spent actively listening, which means you're paying attention to what is being said and not just waiting for your turn to speak. That way, you're sure to hear other people's point of view. Good interpersonal skills can be the foundation on which other life skills are built, so they must be continually improved and refined.

Problem Solving Skills

Problem solving may seem like a straightforward skill, but it's considered one of the most complex intellectual abilities. According to a paper by Beyer (1995), critical thinking means making clear, decisive, reasoned judgments. Good critical thinkers can think clearly and rationally, solve problems systematically, and make the right decisions quickly.

As Mike explains, "Problem solving skills are huge, especially as a maintenance leader. You need to be able to go out in any environment and be decisive and direct in your decisions and calls. You also need to be able to get people to think through problems using a true root-cause methodology."

Mike explains that when something failed, he would ask his team, "Have we done our five whys or applied a reasonable root-cause tool to the problem?" He adds, "Eventually, root cause becomes natural and a part of the culture; it gets done without asking. When this happens, we recognize and appreciate uncomfortable changes and push the needle a little

further. That's how you encourage your team to problem-solve and drive improvement."

Part of problem solving as a maintenance manager also means having implementation skills. Maintenance managers need to develop and successfully implement preventive strategies to help them identify and address potential issues before they occur.

Today's maintenance managers need to be skilled critical thinkers and problem solvers to manage their maintenance budget, supervise a team of technicians, prioritize work based on need, manage maintenance metrics, and stay on top of the latest technologies. To highlight Mike's point above, managers also need to encourage their team to problem solve without their direct supervision 24/7. Doing these things means processing information quickly and making quick, effective decisions. The most skilled managers will look at all the evidence, interpret the data, evaluate all the alternatives, and consider their top priorities to develop a solution or suggestion.

SPOTLIGHT

Problem Solving: The 5 Whys Technique

When you experience a problem, ask, "Why did this happen?" Then, repeat the process until the root cause becomes apparent. By repeatedly asking "why," you're filtering out the symptoms and uncovering the problem. For example, your company missed a big product order when some equipment broke down.

1. **Why did the equipment fail?** It overheated.
2. **Why did it overheat?** The cooling fan failed.
3. **Why did the cooling fan fail?** Regular service was missed.
4. **Why was the service missed?** Our paper tracking system was unorganized. It fell through the cracks.
5. **Why don't we have an automated preventive maintenance system?** Our maintenance guy isn't good with computers.

Now you know that replacing the damaged fan will cause this problem to reoccur. The cooling fan wasn't the root of the problem; it was disorganization. To prevent this from reoccurring, you need a better maintenance management system, like a CMMS.

Read more about this here: <https://fixsoftware.com/blog/5-whys-simple-root-cause-analysis/>



Financial Management Skills

Financial management skills are critical for maintenance managers since they play a role in ensuring an organization's long-term sustainability and success. With maintenance departments often responsible for portions of a company's budget, the ability to manage capital effectively can mean the difference between operational excellence and financial strain.

Jason Afara highlights this importance quite effectively, "Maintenance managers should oversee their budgets and work effectively with their finance teams so that they can make their case and point to get the budgets they need for the next quarter or year. Maintenance managers should consider taking financial planning courses to use those skills to benefit them in their role."

Financial management involves overseeing the allocation of funds for equipment purchases, upgrades, and repairs and strategically planning for future needs. Maintenance managers must assess the lifespan of assets, forecast potential breakdowns, and make informed decisions about when to invest in new equipment. Maintenance managers can help maximize overall equipment effectiveness (OEE), reduce downtime, and enhance productivity. This strategic approach safeguards the company's assets and contributes to a stronger bottom line, demonstrating the vital role that maintenance managers play in the organization's financial health.

Read more about financial management skills for maintenance managers here:
<https://fiixsoftware.com/blog/how-to-budget-and-forecast-for-maintenance-teams/>



Time Management Skills

Time management is organizing and planning how much of your time you spend on each activity to provide the greatest value for the organization. As maintenance managers, you are constantly interrupted and pulled in different directions by conflicting demands, so it can be difficult to plan your time.

As Jason explains, it's important not to be "...running around trying to get everything done as it comes in. It's not going to be possible; you have to take things one step at a time, or else mistakes are more likely to happen. You don't want to make mistakes regarding your equipment."

As Jason puts it, don't confuse activity with achievement. Good time management requires a shift in thinking from getting stuff done to achieving results. It's about working smarter, not harder. Spend 15 minutes each morning planning your day, stick to meeting schedules, and ensure all meetings end on time. He adds "...block time in your calendar, and experiment with what works for you. When you walk the floor, answer emails, plan your day, and try to accomplish 1-3 things daily, not more."

You can use a computerized maintenance management system (CMMS) to help plan your and your maintenance team's day. A CMMS is a critical tool for today's maintenance managers. It helps you streamline your maintenance processes and strategies, manage work orders, and track asset performance.

Becoming well-versed in CMMS software empowers maintenance managers to drive operational excellence by optimizing maintenance workflows, improving asset performance, and making data-informed decisions. Beyond reducing maintenance costs, leveraging CMMS technology positions maintenance teams as proactive drivers of their organizations' reliability, efficiency, and innovation. Embracing these tools is essential for staying competitive in an increasingly complex and automated industry.

If you're working with maintenance management software, insist all work requests are submitted through the guest request portal so your phone does not constantly ring and you can get things done. You can schedule time in your day to review the work request queue. Reserve the phone for issues that could be critical to the business. The most effective maintenance managers have excellent time management skills and get more done simultaneously. It's a valuable skill that can be learned easily and then refined over time.

Read more about using a CMMS for your team:

<https://fixxsoftware.com/cmms/>



Teamwork Skills

Teamwork is viewed as the most efficient way to get things done in any organization. The results achieved by the entire team are greater than the sum achieved by the individuals. Why? Well, when individuals work together as a team instead of going it alone, they can bounce ideas off each other and arrive at the best solution quicker. Many hands also make for light work, so deadlines get met sooner.

As Mike explains, teamwork is more about action than words, “...as a team leader, you are going to be looked to for support, and nothing speaks louder than action. Who do we enjoy working with? Certainly, not individuals who slack and aren’t doing the work, so it’s important to be a supportive team leader who steps up and helps the team. This is teamwork in its purest form.”

Teamwork also often leads to better decisions, products, or services. All of this means that in your role as a maintenance manager, you need to look out for and promote behaviors that lead to effective teamwork. Look for team players who are reliable, respectful, cooperative, flexible, and who show commitment to both the team and the task at hand. Those are the people you want to work with.

As a successful maintenance manager, you also need to recognize the different strengths of each member of the team and then create teams of people who complement each other and work well together. Bringing in different perspectives allows you to be an active listener and develop your interpersonal skills, enabling you to develop people in their skill sets. The last point is important because developing people as leaders means you don’t need to face maintenance challenges alone. The ability to get the most out of the team through teamwork and collaboration is a crucial skill that will help you in your career.

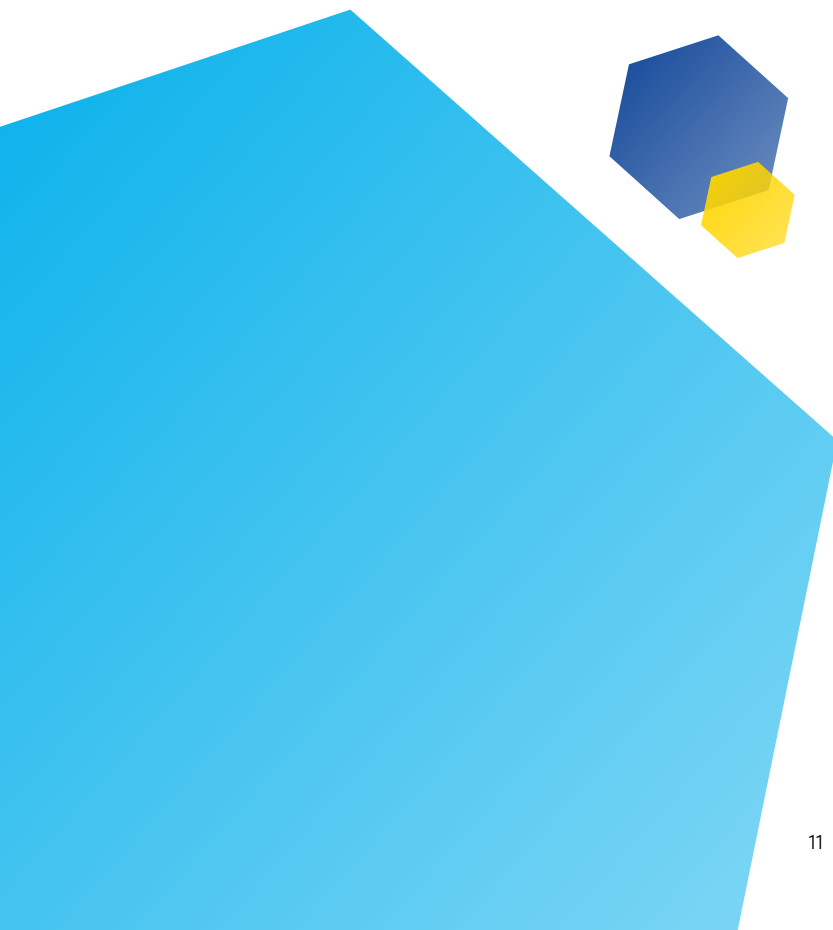
Ability to Develop People

One of the biggest challenges in any business is finding, developing, and deploying the right talent to achieve business goals. Many organizations are very good at hiring and deploying the right people, but they need to remember the development part. Change is inevitable, so your team needs ongoing training and development to learn new skills and take on more significant and complex challenges.

“A successful maintenance manager works with subordinates to identify their areas for improvement and provide them with the training and development they need,” says Roopali Bagaria. She adds that some people may want to further their skills through training and education; others may want more responsibility. Maintenance managers need to keep an open-door policy and enable their team to get what they need.

A great way to do this is to hold regular knowledge transfers so the team can share information, ideas, and experiences. Plan your work orders so experienced team members can mentor the less experienced. In addition, if you have well-trained, capable people, you can reward them with promotion opportunities when you can.

The ability to develop people is an important skill for a maintenance manager to learn, as it will create a culture of continuous learning and betterment. Make your team’s long-term career development one of your top priorities. It leads to high-performing, productive, and motivated maintenance teams.



“ A successful maintenance manager works with subordinates to identify their areas for improvement and provide them with the training and development they need.

**Roopali Bagaria, Implementation Manager,
Fiix by Rockwell Automation**



“ Change is inevitable, so the ability to adapt to change is a crucial skill for maintenance managers. Great leaders can also facilitate change.

**Mike Cooper, Solutions Consultant,
Fiix by Rockwell Automation**

Adaptability

The world is changing fast. Markets evolve quickly, equipment and systems become more complex, health and safety are now the highest priorities, CO2 emissions influence how we manufacture goods, and we use mobile apps for everything. Organizations must be adaptable to maintain a competitive advantage, and the same is true for individuals.

In today's fast-paced environments, you cannot be set in your ways, or you will get left behind. As Mike highlights, “Change is inevitable, so the ability to adapt to change is a crucial skill for maintenance managers. Great leaders can also facilitate change.” The modern maintenance manager must adapt quickly to changing circumstances and environments. They must be willing to embrace new ideas, ways of working, and technologies. The most adaptable individuals thrive on uncertainty and respond positively when their routines change.

Implementing new technology allows maintenance managers to get ahead in different ways. They have become technologically advanced and aware of industry trends, which enables them to use new solutions to enhance their maintenance strategies. Mike highlights that it also allows them to streamline their operations: “Since managers collaborate with other departments like operations, environmental health and safety (EHS), production, and quality control...streamlining processes for everyone makes for a more productive team.”

To become more adaptable, you need to get out of your comfort zone and push the envelope. Learn new skills, adopt new technologies, and continuously reinvent yourself. Challenge the status quo, demonstrate openness to fresh ideas, and lose rigidity. Welcome new ways of doing everyday tasks or ways to make existing work processes more efficient. Being adaptable makes you more approachable and increases your ability to communicate with other people. It also makes you more able to handle change when it happens.





“ The ability to stay calm at a point of high stress is one of the most important skills a maintenance manager can have,

**Jason Afara, Director, Solutions Consultants
Flix by Rockwell Automation**

Emotional Regulation

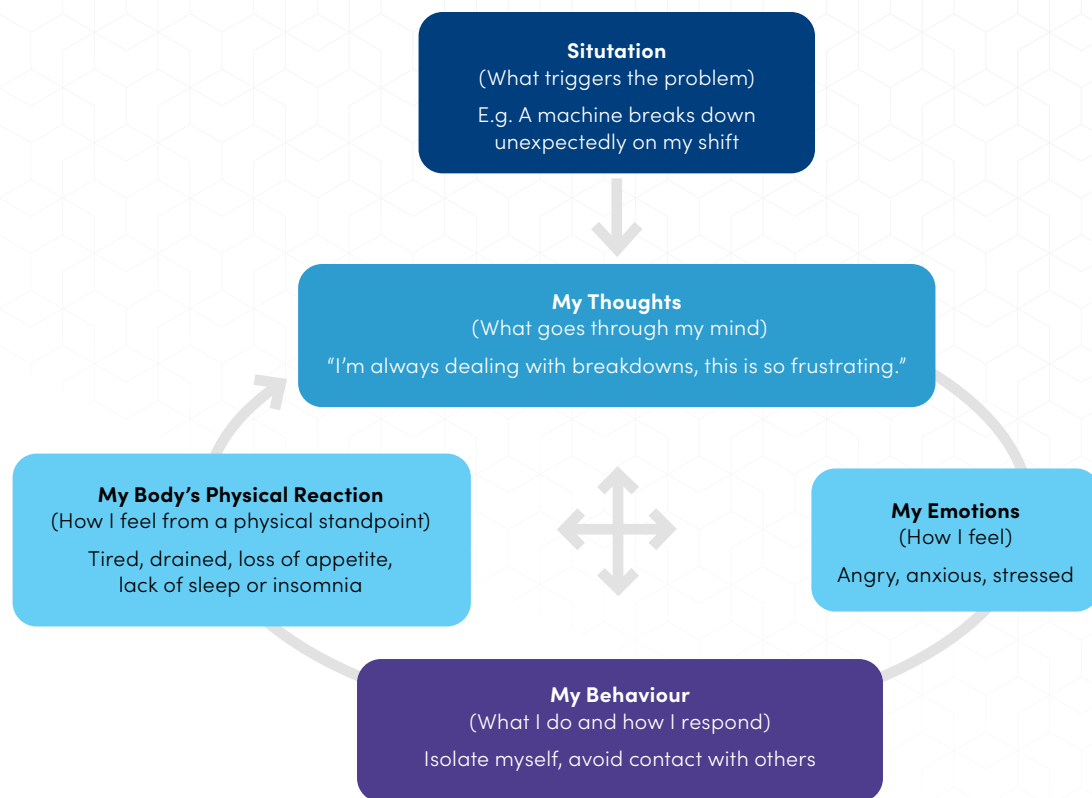
In the fast-paced and often high-pressure environment of industrial maintenance, emotional regulation is one of the most understated skills for maintenance managers. These leaders are frequently tasked with handling unexpected equipment failures, tight deadlines, and complex team dynamics—all of which can generate significant stress. The ability to manage emotions effectively not only impacts the manager’s well-being but also influences the entire team’s performance and morale.

As Jason highlights, maintenance managers have demanding jobs, “...when things that never break down suddenly do, your team will look at you, and when things that always break down do once again, your team will still look at you. You are rarely the one looking at others to solve the hard problems as a manager,” says Jason. He also adds that it’s essential to control and keep realistic expectations and that you don’t necessarily have to have an answer for everything; you can say: great question, let me investigate that. But taking the time to look into problems has added pressure when the situation is chaotic, so how do you manage?

“The ability to stay calm at a point of high stress is one of the most important skills a maintenance manager can have,” says Jason. He adds that staying calm enables maintenance managers to focus during crises, making clear-headed decisions prioritizing safety and efficiency. He also adds that taking breaks and reaching out to your backup is fine when you are away.

Maintenance managers can maintain a professional demeanor by managing their emotions, preventing stress from escalating into conflicts or poor decision-making. This skill fosters a positive work environment, as emotionally regulated leaders can empathize with their team members, provide constructive feedback, and lead by example.

The chart below can help you navigate and understand your emotional regulation. It provides a guideline to help you better understand your emotions and the physical and mental toll they may take. Of course, it can help provide a higher-level perspective on your emotions to ultimately help you step away and get a bird’s-eye view during periods of high stress.



Maintenance managers who excel in emotional regulation are better equipped to handle the long-term challenges of their role. They can build resilience, reduce burnout, and cultivate a work culture that values mental health and well-being. This leads to higher team engagement, lower turnover rates, and a more cohesive, productive workforce.

Emotional regulation is, therefore, not just a personal asset but a crucial leadership quality that drives overall organizational success. Additionally, maintenance managers need to take care of their own mental health and stress management, which we will cover in the next section.

“ Stress affects your productivity, quality of work, and overall mental health. The difference between a good maintenance manager and a great one is that one can manage their stress and one that can’t.

**Roopali Bagaria, Implementation Manager,
Fiix by Rockwell Automation**

Stress Management

Stress can consume you if it’s allowed to build up over time. As a maintenance manager, handling stress may not be a skill in the strictest sense, but it can mean the difference between success and failure. Managing stress doesn’t mean taking a deep breath and getting on with it; managing stress means controlling the things around you that can lead to stress.

Roopali highlights this well: “Stress affects your productivity, quality of work, and overall mental health. The difference between a good maintenance manager and a great one is that one can manage their stress and one that can’t.”

When you control the controllable, you can reduce your chances of suffering from stress. The skills mentioned in this eBook can help you handle stress daily. The skill to control stress will keep you in good spirits and positively affect those around you.

SPOTLIGHT

Did you know...

Changes in health due to routine and daily stress from work pressures can be complex to notice at first. Over time, this continued strain on your body can lead to heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, anxiety and other illnesses.

Try to cope by focusing on what you accomplished, not the things that didn’t get done. Learn to say no, avoid becoming overwhelmed, and avoid dwelling on problems.

Read more about the effects of stress on your health here:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/publications/stress/index.shtml>

By controlling the factors around you that contribute to stress, you can foster a more efficient, less stressful work environment. Below are four key steps to follow in order to manage stress in your day-to-day:

1. Focus on long-term solutions

Instead of repeatedly addressing the same problems, shift your focus to long-term solutions. Techniques like [root cause analysis](#) (using methods like the “[5 Whys](#)” or [fishbone diagrams](#)) can help identify underlying issues. Addressing these root cause minimizes the likelihood of future breakdowns, reducing stress in the long run.

[Get a free wishbone diagram for your maintenance team](#)

2. Embrace continuous improvement

Adopting continuous improvement methodologies, such as [Kaizen](#) or [Lean Six Sigma](#), enables you to streamline processes and eliminate inefficiencies. By consistently working towards better operational standards, you can lower the occurrence of unexpected problems, which helps alleviate stress.

3. Develop crisis management protocols

Establishing robust Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and conducting regular emergency drills ensures your team is prepared for potential crises. When everyone knows their role during high-pressure situations, problems are resolved more quickly, reducing the overall stress that accompanies unforeseen events.

4. Leverage support systems

Building a strong support network is crucial for managing stress as a maintenance manager. Connecting with peers through industry groups like International Facility Management Association ([IFMA](#)), Building Owners and Managers Association International ([BOMA](#)), The Association for Facilities Engineering ([AFE](#)), or Canadian Facility Management and Design ([CFM&D](#)), can provide valuable insights and a sense of community. Seeking mentorship from someone with experience in high-stress roles offers practical advice and guidance during challenging times.

Additionally, many organizations offer Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) that provide confidential counseling and mental health services to support employees. Speak to your supervisor or human resources team to understand what's available to you through your organization. Lastly, incorporating self-care strategies, such as taking regular breaks, getting enough sleep, eating healthy meals, and journaling, helps to manage stress and maintain well-being. Leveraging these support systems can make a significant difference in handling the pressures of the role.

Conclusion

If your goal is to lead a team of maintenance engineers, then develop these skills to succeed. If you are already in a management position, developing and refining these skills will help you get the most out of your team, gain respect from company executives, and give you more career advancement opportunities. Always remember that you don't need to try to be a 10/10 on all of the skills outlined. Work on one thing at a time and find a mentor.

Many of these skills intersect, so improving one will greatly impact others. Some of these skills will come naturally to you, but they all require additional effort to perfect. They will help you create a healthy work environment where employees look forward to coming to work, taking on more responsibility, and exciting new challenges.



About the Author

Tanya Goncalves is a dynamic brand leader and marketing visionary with a deep passion for revolutionizing the manufacturing and maintenance industries through content creation. She is dedicated to empowering companies by building strong brand recognition through compelling campaigns and demand-driven content that resonates with the heart of the prospective industry audience.



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