

PCA Helps Milliken Chemical Gain Control of MRO Inventory; Increased Maintenance Services Efficiency by 33 Percent

In 2018, when Milliken Chemical's Blacksburg, S.C. facility sought to expand its maintenance, repair and operations (MRO) storeroom to expand parts capacity, management invited PCA to develop a plan. In conjunction with the expansion, plant management also wanted to implement best practices for MRO inventory management.

Today, after an extensive program redesign that tripled storeroom capacity, management says the PCA project has met their goals, and more. "The PCA effort has significantly increased the efficiency of engineering services—the maintenance group," says Milliken MRO Supply Chain Manager Kyle Bailey, CMRP. "Not having to search for parts and components conservatively saves one-third of their time in any given week. If the system shows there are two of a gasket in the CMMS, we can be confident they are sitting there. Before, ensuring correct inventory levels was difficult."

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The Road to Best Practices

Milliken reached out to PCA initially, Bailey says, after they heard of the firm and its capabilities through networking. "They came in and we told them what we wanted to do, as far as what we were building," says Bailey. "We told them we wanted to achieve systemic world-class best practices." With Milliken and PCA in accord regarding the level of excellence, PCA was able to implement its Best Practices Playbook model, which would enable Milliken to achieve the highest level of lasting success with its effort.



PCA experts suggested that Bailey and his MRO peers visit one of the PCA's "success stories" — a plant in Gastonia where PCA had also implemented a successful MRO system. Not only would the visit give the Milliken team an opportunity to see an MRO storeroom layout similar to what PCA would provide, it would also enable them to speak with management at the Gastonia facility and benchmark the project's success. "I was really impressed that they took us to tour the other facility," says Bailey. "We interviewed some of the people there, and we could see that they had done a good job with that project."

A Foundation for Achievement

To lay the groundwork for success, PCA team performed an assessment, not only to identify shortcomings in the existing MRO storeroom and inventory management effort, but also to pinpoint gaps between current and best-practices operation. PCA then developed a proposal that addressed the existing space shortage and identified an optimal storeroom location. With the proposal, PCA experts provided a business plan that showed Milliken management how the relocation would work, what the new space would look like, how utilization would be optimized and more. On the personnel side, the PCA team outlined activities that would accompany Milliken's physical improvements. These would include staff coaching and mentoring to teach MRO best practices and to cement their adoption into plant operations.

The Pathway to Excellence

With the preparatory and planning phases complete, Milliken management and PCA were ready to get started. The first phase had taken three-months; the physical build-out, process and cultural enhancements, and benchmarking would entail another six. "This project was too important to rush," says Bailey. "The intent was to take our time, get comfortable with the process and the PCA practitioners, and do it right."

Over that six-month period, Bailey notes, PCA implemented its recommendations down to the final detail, not only to promote the new practices, but also to help workers discard obstructive habits. "They told us, 'Throw out all the old stuff that's been laying around for years. Go through your junk drawers,'" says Bailey. "That was advice I knew already, but a lot of folks don't follow. It's why people end up with yards full of junk," says Bailey.

"The planning was also really good," Bailey continues. "They created an efficient layout and floorplan for the organization of our storage racks. I had ideas for the design, but I am a mechanical engineer, not an industrial engineer. Their guy looked at what I suggested and improved upon it."

Benefits...and Final Thoughts

"Before the PCA partnership, we had inefficient, ad-hoc organization, with critical spare parts in three different places that were not designed to hold them," Bailey says. "Everything was disjointed, with nothing designed for a singular purpose."

"After the PCA project to optimize our MRO process, all inventoried parts are in a secure, controlled area with high-definition cameras guarding them. We are procuring and

stocking what our plant's technicians and managers need, providing a dependable resource to get critical work done," Bailey concludes. "Systemically, we manage MRO support via 17 new Standard Practice Procedures, assuring that we do what we say — and document what we do. When staff need stock items, there is a better than 95 percent probability the right part will be there."

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Since 1976, Performance Consulting Associates, Inc. (PCA) has been providing maintenance and reliability "best practice" support to global manufacturing corporations across all industries. Based in Duluth, GA, PCA has been delivering engineering and consulting services for Asset Reliability, MRO Stores and Maintenance Management—and now, Talent Process Management, as well. For more information regarding all PCA services, please visit <https://www.pcaconsulting.com>.



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