Streamlined Maintenance Scheduling Enhances Schedule Compliance & Production Uptime

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Todd Hicks, Planning and Shutdown Superintendent

ADITYA BIRLA GROUP

About Aditya Birla Group & AV Group

The Aditya Birla Group ("Aditya") is a dominant player in viscose staple fibre, metals, cement, branded apparel, financial services, and other sectors. A US $41 billion corporation, Aditya is in the League of Fortune 500. For its New Brunswick subsidiary, the AV Group, the pursuit of excellence in people, process, and product has made Aditya one of Atlantic Canada's Top Employers. This Canadian affiliate produces high-quality dissolving grade pulp used to manufacture viscose staple fiber. Smooth maintenance and operations of mill assets ensures optimum production capacity for the AV Group.

Challenge: Cumbersome Spreadsheets Make Scheduling Unreliable

Todd Hicks, Planning and Shutdown Superintendent at the AV Group, oversees a multi-discipline workforce operating on complex shift patterns in a risk-intolerant environment. The AV Group relies on commercial solutions to manage asset performance, scheduling, and to pay their labor force.

The AV Group sought to implement a proactive, weekly scheduling process, but faced a number of hurdles. Work order and labor data had to be copied into spreadsheets. The approach was fragile – it would only work if the data was copied in the exact format required. Overall, this mission-critical process was labor-intensive and lacked the rigor to reliably compute key performance indicators (KPIs).

"There was no way to trust the accuracy of metrics, because no matter what you do with a spreadsheet, once somebody copies it to their desktop, they can change whatever they want," warned Todd Hicks. "When you made your weekly schedule, somebody could change it to inflate their numbers. Its difficult to figure out if somebody's cheating the system … the only way to really do it would be to print everything out the week before and compare it to what they have now."

Todd Hicks explained that spreadsheets compromised metrics within the AV Group, "There was just no accurate way to compare one department to another. It was miserable to get metrics, especially when doing it mill-wide."

Solution: Sockeye Helps Maintenance Save Time and Money

The AV Group chose Sockeye to automate weekly and daily scheduling and deployment was expedited with the help of the knowledgeable Sockeye support team. "The support from the Sockeye team was excellent. They are a very responsive team and willing to help in every respect. They know their product and they understand maintenance scheduling," said Brian Delvecchio, IT Director at the AV Group.

"Strictly from an IT perspective, implementation was quite simple. There really is only one task for IT and that's to create the interfaces. Sockeye worked very closely with us to configure them. Deployment was a piece of cake, really. Sockeye is very easy to use, now the schedule is visible to everyone and we've eliminated key-in time cards."
– Brian Delvecchio

Within months of adopting Sockeye, Todd Hicks recognized several positive impacts. "We now have

a weekly scheduling process in place where the planners post the weekly schedule on Thursdays for the upcoming week, with the supervisors managing daily assignments," explained Todd Hicks. "Work order and labor availability are automatically pulled from other systems, saving planner time by eliminating the copy and paste exercise."

The daily assignments are fed over to the time and attendance solution to ease time capture. Overall, supervisors now have more time for mentoring and monitoring the shop floor. Tradespeople see their assignments in advance, saving start of shift discussions and attendant loss of time.

"Sockeye's greatest advantage is ease of scheduling. With a simple drag-and-drop, you can allocate workers. Scheduling used to take me hours to do for just one crew, and I planned schedules for six different crews. What used to take me up to five days of work can be now done with Sockeye in just under an hour," shared Todd Hicks. "Because Sockeye synchronizes the data directly from our CMMS, we know the information is valid and trustworthy. When our guys get to the stores, we know that the parts ordered have been activated. We can also trust the data in Sockeye for payroll. With just three key strokes, we pay 75 people."

Todd Hicks emphasized the productivity gains,

"The effort to create a shutdown schedule went from 40 hours down to just 1 hour."

In addition to saving valuable time with scheduling, Sockeye is helping reduce overall maintenance costs. "Sockeye identifies where deficiencies are in your man hours, so you can level between crews," explained Todd Hicks. "For instance, if Crew A is 40 hours over schedule, but Crew B is only 35% scheduled, you can move your resources to level it out to avoid overtime pay. That saves you money."

Sockeye Drives Improvements in Production Uptime & Worker Safety

Fortune 1000 Enterprises rely on Sockeye to increase uptime and reduce lost time accidents. By enabling maintenance managers to streamline scheduling, Sockeye helps track and improve schedule compliance by 12 to 20 percent. Better workforce utilization frees valuable up time for up to 10 percent more preventative maintenance, reducing emergent work and increasing uptime by 1.2 to 1.8 percent. The impact in terms of optimized wrench time, improved production uptime, and reduced accidents can typically be measured in the millions of dollars.

Experts agree: scheduled work is 3 times less costly and 5 times safer. "Without question, Sockeye gives us better data integrity than spreadsheets, which can be easily modified by workers," explained Brian Delvecchio. "Utilization is better. Everything is in place for planned work – the schedule, staged parts, and the people. You're not waiting for people to show up in an emergency, wondering what parts are needed, then running back to stores for parts. It's huge – the difference between emergency work and planned work."

Management Can Now Trust Mill-Wide Key Performance Indicators

There is now a high degree of confidence and trust in the accuracy and reliability of scheduling data managed in Sockeye. "We have a company-wide focus on reliability. Right now, that is our key metric. What's generated out of Sockeye is the bible," confirmed Todd Hicks.

A range of KPIs for reactive, preventive, and corrective maintenance are produced automatically in Sockeye, providing Todd Hicks and his team with valuable insight into worker performance. He can see trending numbers by department, helping pinpoint problem areas, while providing the information to communicate across the mill.

"Sockeye eliminated the ambiguity associated with previous spreadsheets and paper-based processes. Now a work order is either done or not. We've captured the consistency we sought by implementing Sockeye," concluded Todd Hicks. "Having evaluated other solutions prior to deployment," he declared, "Sockeye is the best work order scheduling solution on the market today!"

Results

Sockeye has enabled the AV Group to:

- Optimize scheduling accuracy & reliability
- Reduce overtime & expedite worker payroll
- Improve confidence in mill-wide metrics
- Enhance schedule compliance & adherence
- Improve production uptime & capacity