

# Improving Awareness of Assets That Require Attention

## The Facility Maintenance Crystal Ball

Today's fast-paced world requires corporations to respond quickly to customer needs while providing reliable service of a given commodity. While this may seem like an impossible task to accomplish, many service-oriented organizations—including utilities and municipalities, among others - are developing strategies specifically targeted to address these needs.

By J. Peter Gomez



### 'Whack-A-Mole' Game

More than 20 years ago, a veteran electric lineman once told me that responding to a system outage was often like playing the novelty 'Whack-A-Mole' game, as seen at many local amusement parks. "If only I had a bigger hammer, I could win every time!" a game patron was likely to say. To meet today's high efficiency and high reliability consumer needs, such a hammer is being developed in the form of sophisticated analytical tools that enable predictive analysis to be performed at a variety of levels on a multitude of devices.

### Enterprise Asset Management Model

The power of integrated data systems has proven to be a key enabler in supporting these tools and the foundation of true enterprise asset management programs. Enterprise Asset Management (EAM), is defined as a methodology to optimize and apply strategies

related to asset lifecycle investment and work planning decisions. It should also be noted that EAM is not so much about doing the work better but rather becoming better at deciding what kind of work to do, and where and when to do it. In general, EAM systems are implemented as part of a work management system with the ability to record inspection and operational histories to establish specific criteria—which, when met or exceeded, can automatically trigger the creation of work orders against that particular type of asset.

### 'Sweat the Assets'

In order to effectively manage assets, it is critical to determine performance metrics so that these values can be used as a benchmark for tracking improvement and work activity on a given asset. This ability allows an organization to 'sweat the assets' and ensure they are being used as effectively and efficiently as

possible. Another primary business driver of this approach is the ability to proactively respond to service reliability issues before they result in an interruption of service for a client. As such, many solution providers have developed tools that leverage information contained on assets from a variety of legacy data sources, and they've integrated that information with real-time and near-real-time data as appropriate. It is this 'smart' technology that is taking the asset tracking and monitoring activities to a whole new level.



### Asset Optimization Tools

Data latency has become a critical component when it comes to proactively responding to a given situation. However, in order to meet the high reliability service level demands, service companies must have a firm handle on the status of their critical assets. Virtually all of the data tools currently on the market use wireless technology as a means of transmitting data back to a central repository where system planners can monitor activity and recommend changes in operation—usually within minutes of receipt. This has become especially beneficial for the monitoring of remote sites—whereas in the past, time-consuming manual tracking was the only viable option. Now, the ability to replace assets that are nearing the end of their useful life can be foreseen and budgeted accordingly.

It is through this approach that reliable service and timely customer response are being addressed and critical operating data are being captured. With the incorporation of this technology, I often wonder what my now long-since retired electric lineman friend—who so succinctly compared the reactive approach of responding to a system outage to the 'Whack-A-Mole' novelty game—would have to say. I like to think he would say something to the effect of, "Now that's what I call building a bigger hammer!" Somehow that analogy seems to sum it up perfectly.

J. Peter Gomez ([Pete.Gomez@xcelenergy.com](mailto:Pete.Gomez@xcelenergy.com)) is a GITA Past-President and Board Member