

Association supports government's professional development policy

The South African Maintenance Association (SAMA) supports government's efforts in assisting with the continuing professional development of the engineering industry, SAMA vice president **Paul von Zeuner** tells Engineering News.

He says that SAMA is engaged in a number of certification programmes and training initiatives with the aim of developing the local industry, and this includes organisational benchmarking, and providing accreditation for continuing professional development (CPD).

SAMA's seeks to promote the interest of maintenance and asset management professionals in Southern Africa by bringing together aspects of asset management.

The association provides an unbiased assessment programme, which is designed to assess a company's asset management practices.

This is achieved by facilitating communication between SAMA members, industry service providers and other affiliated organisations and institutions, reports Von Zeuner.

“We recommend areas where improvement may be required, but do not offer consulting services in any area, which, if they were offered, could bias our audit findings,” he says.

SAMA makes several services and products available to the industry to assist and grow maintenance practitioners in their effort of improving their company's asset management.

SAMA has , in conjunction with petrochemical company Sasol, adopted the Certified Maintenance & Reliability Professional (CMRP) certification developed by US professional maintenance organisation, the Society for Maintenance & Reliability Professionals (SMRP), which is based in the US.

“The SMRP's aim is to facilitate information exchange through a structured network of maintenance and reliability professionals, and to support maintenance and reliability as an integral part of business management among other things,” explains Von Zeuner.

SAMA council member **Jaco Smit** carries the portfolio for SMRP and is arranging a series of CMRP examinations, the first held being in June, earlier this year, and a second to be held in November, reports SAMA.

“SAMA in conjunction with Sasol is of the opinion that the CMRP examination would benefit asset management and reliability engineers in Southern Africa,” comments Von Zeuner.

Sweating the Assets

Von Zeuner says that it has become a very acceptable corporate goal in the manufacturing industry, some 5 to 10 years ago, for companies to sweat its assets, which implies that the most should be made of the assets owned by an organisation.

This resulted from the need to contain capital expenditure owing to the cost of finance.

He says that the decision to sweat the assets was taken without elevating the life cycle management of the asset to a similar strategic level.

“You cannot sweat the assets, while at the same time cutting cost on maintenance, and then on top of that see the maintenance practitioner as only a necessary evil,” he argues.

In a typical manufacturing plant an increase of 10% in overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) could add significantly to the return on capital employed, which is a figure that often could only be matched by completely avoiding all expenditure on maintenance, reports Von Zeuner.

Objectives

Von Zeuner states that SAMA intends to advance and encourage a higher level of standard for the professional status of the maintenance and asset management in the asset management in industry.

The association also seeks to institute, maintain and improve common specifications for maintenance and asset management, while also encouraging and promoting and effecting voluntary interchange among members of the association.

Von Zeuner also mentions that SAMA hopes to stimulate and promote education, training and original research in the maintenance and asset management fields.

He says that the association aims to promote a representative and centralised body or organisation to collect, collate, co-ordinate and distribute data, ideas, knowledge, methods and techniques by any suitable means for the purpose of improving the efficiency of maintenance and asset management technologies.

Other objectives of the organisation include; building synergistic rapport between companies on maintenance and asset management issues, encourage companies to establish their own training programmes guided by the association's knowledge, and to promote asset management as a means to long-term asset health.

SAMA, which has for just on a decade endorsed the Maintenance Engineers Conference of South Africa (MECSA), hopes to endorse the application of OEE by company, who need to take strategic decisions in order to embody the OEE objectives.

“Making OEE a strategic decision allows the focus on this aspect of the business even at board level, not just as a cost that has to be contained, but as an asset that has to be managed throughout its design life,” suggests Von Zeuner.

Skills Shortages

Von Zeuner states that the skills shortage in the maintenance industry is as severe as any other industry.

“The kind of pressure that the lack of reliable service delivery has brought has identified the urgency with which maintenance has to be viewed,” he says.

He says that the lack of skills development in South Africa over the years is a responsibility that should be shouldered collectively by all stakeholders in the industry.

He endorses the argument that says, “show me a skills shortage and I will show you an organisation that has failed to develop people”.

The role that SAMA can play in the development of skills in South Africa includes benchmarking the maintenance practices of an organisation, proposes Von Zeuner.

He says that the association seeks to play a role in advising and assisting in the establishment of the maintenance professional, through its link with standards bodies, as well as the identification of Service Providers who are affiliated with SAMA.

Von Zeuner mentions that association hosts an annual banquet in recognition of an organisations asset management practices.

Awards are given based on outcomes of the assessment to the companies who adopt maintenance best practice, he says.

The SAMA Maintenance Excellence Awards Gala Evening was held on October 24, in Sandton, Johannesburg.

PAUL VON ZEUNER

Skills shortages is a responsibility that should be shouldered collectively.