Last week, Jeffrey O’Brien from [Maintenance Assistant](http://www.maintenanceassistant.com/) Inc in Toronto, gave a talk to the Master Brewers Association of Ontario on maintenance and the value of using CMMS software in the brewing industry. Jeffrey took us through some maintenance insights before outlining the importance and benefits of using a [CMMS](http://www.maintenanceassistant.com/cmms/) to track and improve your maintenance operations. Here are some interesting insights from Jeff’s talk.

There are two maintenance types – planned maintenance and unplanned maintenance. You can plan to service a system, inspect for wear or plan to let a light bulb fail before you replace it. Either way, you consciously plan the maintenance. On the other hand, unplanned maintenance occurs when we least expect it. This is commonly called breakdown or emergency maintenance. Breakdown maintenance costs 3-9 times more than planned maintenance due to overtime, rushed parts, service call outs etc. so we want to limit breakdown maintenance where possible.

The common misconception is that the role of maintenance is to fix things when they break; however, the clue is in the name. The role of maintenance is to maintain assets so they are available when needed. It is less about fixing assets when they break but rather preserving the function of assets so they are available when needed. In the airline industry, for example, the airlines only make money when the planes are in the air so maintenance must ensure the planes are properly maintained so they are available to perform their function when needed.

Relying on an unplanned or breakdown maintenance strategy is like flying blind. It is impossible to predict failures so can be a costly way to manage maintenance. Yet 55% of all maintenance in North America is unplanned. For small businesses, like craft breweries, this is a lot higher. In the brewing industry, there are a number of other indirect costs to consider such as product quality, customer loyalty and brand reputation. Maintenance can have a huge impact on the product a brewery produces so it makes sense to get it right. The general consensus is you should target [80% planned maintenance](http://www.maintenanceassistant.com/planned-maintenance/) – 20% unplanned maintenance. This leads to greater availability, lower costs and a more controllable and predictable maintenance budget.

**Define the Maintenance Strategy**

The question is how do you improve your maintenance so you control costs? The answer is simple – develop a simple maintenance strategy:

Step 1 – Define the goals of the organization. The brewing industry is seasonal so planning and forecasting is critical. Another goal could be to ensure every employee has a healthy and safe place to work.

Step 2 – Set your KPI’s to match your goals. You cannot improve what you cannot measure so setting KPI’s that will help achieve those goals will help determine if the current strategy is adding value and is effective.

Step 3 – Get a CMMS. It is a simple way to help realize your maintenance and reliability strategy.

Step 4 – Renew Review and Refine. The process is not static but rather a process of continuous improvement.

Employing a simple maintenance strategy like this can result in ~10% improvement in availability, 50% increase in the life of equipment and a 20% reduction in emergency breakdowns, service call outs and spare parts rush orders.

**What is a CMMS?**

[Computerized Maintenance Management System](http://www.maintenanceassistant.com/cmms/) (CMMS) is a software tool to help manage and track maintenance activities such as scheduled maintenance, work orders, parts and inventory, purchasing and projects. The CMMS also gives full visibility and control on maintenance operations so everyone can see what has been done and what needs to be done. It helps identify tasks that need to be done or prioritized ensuring nothing is overlooked. One of the biggest benefits of a CMMS is increased labor productivity. This is because the system can help plan and track work so technicians can complete their tasks without interruption.  With proper planning and tracking, the maintenance team is a lot more organized and less stressed.

A CMMS can help an organization become more safety compliant in a number of ways. Safety procedures can be included on all job plans ensuring technicians are aware of the risks. Safety checks, such fire equipment inspections, can be scheduled and tracked in the CMMS ensuring the organization is compliant and ready for those audits.

There is nothing to fear. In the past, CMMS systems were complex, bloated and difficult to use but modern CMMS applications like Maintenance Assistant CMMS are simple to use, intuitive and accessible on any device like mobile, tablet or PC. A CMMS helps maintenance managers get more organized by reducing the dependence on paper and memory by automating many mundane daily activities. Rather than trolling through receipts and dockets at the end of a year, the facilities manager can simply run a costing report in the CMMS to see where the budget was spent. Over time, a CMMS can help drive down the cost of maintenance, increase asset life, improve productivity, reduce downtime, and lower the total cost of ownership of assets.

**More Information**

Jeff O’Brien is a product specialist and blogger at [Maintenance Assistant Inc.](http://www.maintenanceassistant.com/) Maintenance Assistant is a CMMS cloud solution used by thousands of asset-intensive businesses around the world to transform their maintenance operations, eliminate waste and costly downtime, and manage risk. Our flagship product, MA CMMS™ is a core business management tool used by maintenance managers, technicians, engineers, purchasing agents and business owners to streamline their maintenance operations and improve their bottom line. For more information please see <http://www.maintenanceassistant.com/>