

Adoption of MMP Program at J.D. Irving Accelerates Management Talent

The Maintenance Management Professional (MMP) program focuses on the effective management of physical assets. Mike Crowell, Director of Maintenance at Irving Forest Services in New Brunswick, a division of J.D. Irving Ltd., credits the program with creating a platform for attaining leading practice and performance at the organization, achieving consistency and standardization across divisions.

Crowell provided the keynote address at MainTrain 2018 in Ottawa this September. MainTrain is the annual national conference for the Plant Engineering & Maintenance Association of Canada (PEMAC). The theme of the conference, held September 24 -27, was Connect, Learn and Contribute. Crowell's presentation, *Accelerating Management Talent in Partnership with PEMAC*, acknowledged program provider Northern Lakes College (NLC) as part of J.D. Irving's excellent experience with the MMP program.

"In 2013, we knew we had to change how we do things. Ten people from the division enrolled in Module 1 of the PEMAC MMP program through Northern Lakes College," says Crowell. Five years later, 90 employees have participated in 337 modules, a \$300,000 investment by the company and 23,000 hours of classroom and self-study. Now up to 90 people are involved in the program, including employees from HR and Operations. "This has really engaged our employees and we have 22 who are now MMP-certified."

Crowell comments that the owners place a higher value on training and development programs that provide professional certification, such as MMP through NLC. He goes on to explain that the owners of the company feel that the \$300,000 has had a great return on investment, reflected in the long-term performance trends driven by maintenance activity.

While it is "not quite mandatory" for those employed in maintenance or asset management at Irving Forest Services to complete the MMP program, "by day three or four, new employees know what MMP is and what PEMAC is about," states Crowell. By the time an employee is a Maintenance Superintendent at the company, s/he is normally working on the final module required to obtain MMP certification. Newly-employed graduates with engineering degrees are also encouraged to participate in the some of the modules of the MMP program.

Crowell, who completed his MMP program at NLC and is a member of the Board of Directors of PEMAC, credits module 3 of the program, *Human Resource Management for the Maintenance Manager*, with a change in practice he has adopted. He now includes representatives from the HR department when talking with his employees about training and preparing for growth and future roles at Irving Forest Services. It is now routine for the HR module to be completed by supervisors at the organization.

“NLC is very accommodating and flexible,” observes Crowell. The three-hour time difference between Alberta (where NLC is located) and New Brunswick was bridged easily by scheduling classes earlier in the day, allowing a start time of 6:30 p.m. EST. “We asked Edith Mackenzie [Senior Liaison with the Continuing Education & Corporate Training department at NLC] and Lisa Bigstone [Admissions Specialist] about adjusting the schedule and ‘bam’ it was done.”

Crowell credits the MMP program (and PEMAC’s corresponding Asset Management Program) with allowing Irving Forest Services to achieve standardization and consistency. Employees who participate in the MMP program and move up within the organization share the same mindset or strategy around maintenance and asset management. “We can transfer people between divisions easily,” he explains. “The other benefit is that we are speaking the same language.” Crowell indicated safety performance has also increased, and part of the credit goes to the emphasis placed on safety in the MMP program.

Crowell summarizes the division’s participation in the program as a great experience. “We are seeing the benefits. Our employees are more engaged and motivated. They understand the roles they occupy.” Crowell urges influencers and leaders at other organizations to adopt the program stating, “It’s an easy sell; do the math.”