

Why Maintenance Work Looks Ready – Until It Isn't

Diagnosing the Hidden Readiness Gap in Industrial Maintenance

If you've spent any time around maintenance planners, you've probably heard a familiar phrase:

"The job is ready."

On paper, it often is. The work order is in SAP. The priority is assigned. The schedule is built. The planner checks the box marked complete. Everything looks organized, professional, and under control.

And then the crew shows up. No permit. Wrong gasket. Missing drawing. Isolation not defined. Operations says the unit can't come down today.

Suddenly a job that looked perfectly ready in the system turns into a familiar field reality: standing around trying to figure out what went wrong.

If this sounds familiar, it's because nearly every industrial organization experiences the same phenomenon.

Maintenance work often looks ready—until it isn't.

The Illusion of 'Complete in SAP'

Modern enterprise systems are excellent at recording information. Systems like SAP are very good at managing work orders, materials, and planning steps.

But there's an important difference between "Complete in SAP" and "Executable in the field."

A work order can appear perfectly organized in the system while still being unexecutable in practice. This gap between administrative readiness and operational readiness is one of the biggest hidden problems in maintenance.

The Real Causes of Maintenance Delays

When maintenance schedules fall apart, organizations often assume the problem lies with technician productivity or poor scheduling.

In reality, most execution delays come from readiness failures such as missing permits, unavailable materials, incomplete job plans, or unclear equipment isolation requirements.

How Experience Used to Hide the Problem

For years, experienced planners and supervisors quietly compensated for readiness gaps.

Veteran planners knew which jobs were truly ready and which required additional investigation. As experienced workers retire, this informal knowledge disappears and readiness problems become far more visible.

The Hidden Cost of Maintenance Failures

When jobs are not truly ready, the impact ripples across the organization. Schedules collapse, crews lose productive time, emergency work increases, and confidence in the planning process erodes.

The Real Insight – Readiness is a Decision Problem

Most organizations treat readiness as a scheduling problem. In reality it is a decision problem.

Before a job goes on the schedule someone must decide whether materials are available, permits prepared, documents accessible, and operations aligned on timing.

A Different Way to Think About Readiness

Instead of discovering readiness problems during execution, organizations can identify readiness risks earlier by analyzing maintenance history, job characteristics, and materials availability.

This provides planners with visibility into readiness risk before schedules are finalized.

The Future of Maintenance Execution

Maintenance teams are highly capable. Technicians know how to repair equipment and planners work hard to organize work.

What they often lack is visibility into readiness risk.

When organizations improve that visibility, schedules become more reliable and crews spend less time waiting—allowing maintenance teams to focus on keeping the plant running.

— **Mike Jordan, CEO, Procex Technology**