

# Case Study - Maintenance Contract Recovery

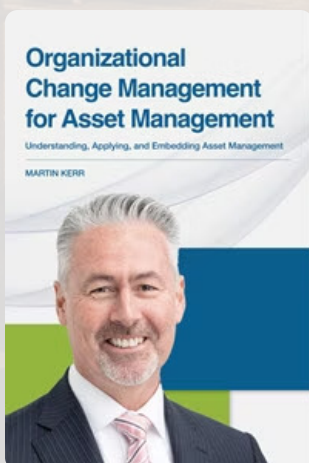
## When Alignment and Assurance Become the Foundation for Transformation

A real-world case study demonstrating how Asset Management and Organisational Change Management helped recover a failing maintenance environment in just **16 weeks**.



The greatest problem was not the assets.  
The greatest problem was not the contract.  
The greatest problem was the culture surrounding both.

Based on the case study from Martin Kerr's book **Organisational Change Management for Asset Management**



Asset Management and Organisational Change Management are often treated as separate disciplines. In reality, successful organisations need both. Asset Management provides the structure, while Change Management helps people adopt and sustain it.

This book combines practical experience, real-world case studies, and lessons learned to demonstrate how Asset Management and Organisational Change Management work together to create alignment, capability, and sustainable value. Its purpose is to help organisations bridge the gap between strategy and execution and turn Asset Management into an embedded organisational capability.

# A Plant Held Together by Bandages

## The Challenge

Acme Processing Plant (APP) had operated for more than 70 years. Over that time it had endured multiple ownership changes, shifting operating models, and various commercial arrangements that left the workforce fractured and the organisation without a coherent identity. Industrial tensions had accumulated across decades, and trust both between groups of employees and between functions had eroded to the point of near dysfunction.

The result was an organisation that had learned how to survive but had forgotten how to perform. Assets deteriorated quietly while the people responsible for them pointed in opposite directions. The plant continued to operate, but only barely and at enormous hidden cost.

### Asset Challenges

- Deteriorating plant condition
- No agreed reinvestment strategy
- Poor maintenance discipline
- Widespread equipment misuse

### Workforce & Cultural Challenges

- Long-serving versus newer employees
- Industrial history shaping daily behaviours
- Pervasive blame and denial
- Defensive and justificatory responses
- Low trust between all groups

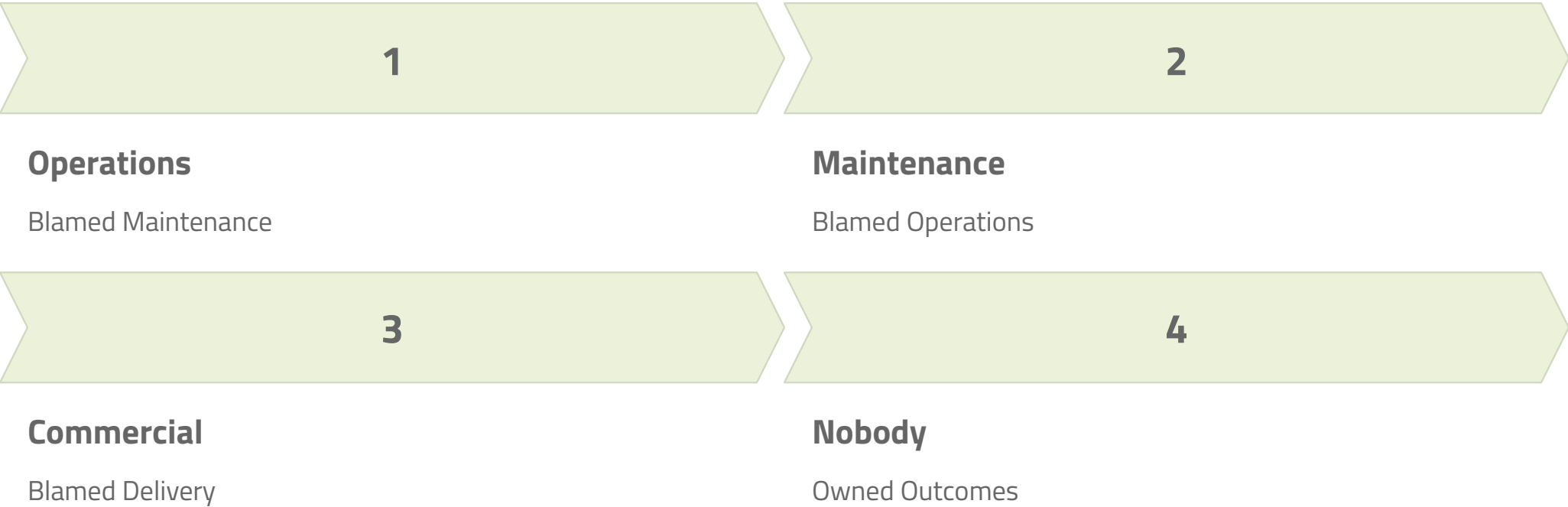
 The Board demanded a turnaround. The timeframe: **16 weeks.**

# Maintenance Was the Symptom

## The Real Issue Was Organisational Alignment

Every function had developed its own survival strategy. Operations had learned to work around maintenance. Maintenance had learned to protect itself from operations. Commercial teams tracked their own metrics. Planning teams managed their own schedules. Each function had become adept at self-preservation and entirely ineffective at shared outcomes.

When problems occurred, the response was predictable. Operations blamed maintenance. Maintenance blamed operations. Commercial blamed delivery. Delivery blamed planning. Every group had a defensible narrative. Nobody had ownership of the result. The organisation was optimising its parts whilst destroying its whole a textbook failure of alignment that no maintenance procedure could resolve.



Traditional top-down management had compounded the problem. Decades of directive leadership had cultivated cynicism, embedded resistance, and normalised complacency. Introducing formal "Asset Management" language at this stage would have triggered immediate scepticism trust and credibility had not yet been earned. Before changing systems, processes, or assets, the organisation first needed to change how it thought.

**Key Insight:** Before changing systems, processes, or assets the organisation first needed to change how it thought.

# Starting with Principles, Not Procedures

## The Asset Management Approach

The turnaround deliberately avoided beginning with rules, standards, or process redesign. Experience has shown that introducing procedural frameworks into a low-trust environment triggers compliance theatre people follow the letter of a process whilst ignoring its intent. The recovery team made a conscious decision to begin with principles, because principles are easier for people to understand, internalise, and apply within their own context without feeling managed or judged.

From the extensive framework of ISO 55000, two foundational principles were selected as the starting point. Not because the others were unimportant, but because these two were the most immediately actionable and the most likely to create visible, felt progress within a short timeframe.

### Alignment

Helping people understand what the organisation was trying to achieve, how functions connected to one another, and how individual decisions created consequences elsewhere. Alignment is not consensus it is coordinated intent.

### Assurance

Helping people understand what "good" looked like, which standards genuinely mattered, and why consistency was important. Assurance converts abstract expectations into tangible, observable behaviours.

These concepts became the basis for practical discussions rather than management jargon. Teams explored what alignment meant in their specific roles and what assurance looked like on their specific equipment. Asset Management, introduced this way, felt less like a corporate imposition and more like a shared language for solving real problems.

- ❏ **Asset Management Insight:** Asset Management is often introduced as a system. In reality, it begins with shared understanding.

# Pulling the Organisation Forward

## The Change Management Approach

The transformation did not attempt to force change through directives or compliance mandates. Forced change in a low-trust environment produces the appearance of progress whilst generating resistance below the surface. Instead, the recovery approach focused on creating conditions where people could pull themselves forward where the motivation for change came from within teams rather than being imposed from above.

This distinction is not semantic. It is the difference between an organisation that changes while being watched and one that continues to improve when nobody is watching. The goal was always the latter.

### Leadership Engagement

Leadership teams were challenged directly to move beyond blame, historical excuses, and inherited grievances. Leaders were asked to model the behaviours they expected from others a requirement that proved uncomfortable for some and genuinely transformative for others.

### Open Conversations

Structured sessions created safe environments for people to acknowledge current realities, name existing frustrations, and accept personal responsibilities. Many of these conversations had not happened in years and their absence had been costly.

### Principle-Based Discussions

Rather than instructing people what to do, discussions were framed around alignment, accountability, trust, and outcomes. People were invited to think, not merely to comply a fundamentally different experience from anything most of them had encountered.

### Balancing Accountability and Recognition

The approach combined clear expectations with visible accountability, positive reinforcement, and genuine recognition of progress. The stick and the carrot were both real and both consistently applied. Selective enforcement had been one of the plant's most corrosive historical patterns.



**Change Management Insight:** People rarely commit to change they feel is being imposed. People support change they help create.

# What Asset Management Revealed

## Asset Management Lessons from the Recovery

The recovery process surfaced a set of asset management realities that are common across heavy industry but rarely named clearly. Understanding these lessons and their root causes is essential for any organisation seeking to move beyond reactive maintenance into sustainable performance.

### Asset Condition Reflects Organisational Condition

The deteriorating assets were a visible symptom of deeper organisational dysfunction. Improving assets without improving the organisation that manages them produces only temporary results.

### Reinvestment Requires Strategy

Without an agreed asset strategy, maintenance becomes reactive, costs increase, reliability declines, and trust erodes. Strategy is not a luxury it is the foundation on which maintenance effectiveness is built.

### Alignment Drives Performance

Every function influences asset outcomes: Operations, Maintenance, Supply Chain, Finance, and Leadership all contribute. When functions work in opposition, assets pay the price.

### Value Requires Coordination

Asset Management is not about maintaining equipment. It is about coordinating organisational capability to deliver value. Equipment is the mechanism. The organisation is the instrument.

The coordinated activity of the organisation determines asset performance. This is not an opinion it is the fundamental premise of ISO 55000 and the lived experience of every recovery project that succeeds.

# What Change Management Revealed

## Change Management Lessons from the Recovery

The behavioural and cultural dimensions of the recovery were as instructive as the technical ones. Organisations that manage assets without managing the human systems surrounding them will consistently underperform not because of poor engineering, but because of avoidable organisational dynamics that accumulate silently over time.



### Culture Cannot Be Ignored

The organisation had accumulated years of unresolved tensions. Unaddressed cultural dysfunction does not remain static it compounds. Every avoided conversation, every unresolved grievance, and every unpunished poor behaviour deepens the problem. Ignoring culture whilst investing in systems is one of the most expensive mistakes an organisation can make.



### Leadership Behaviour Matters

Employees closely observe what leaders do, not what leaders say. The gap between stated values and observed behaviours is one of the most powerful and most destructive forces in any organisation. Leaders who modelled the expected change accelerated progress. Those who did not became visible obstacles.



### Principles Create Ownership

When people understand why change matters, what success looks like, and how they personally contribute, engagement deepens. Ownership cannot be assigned it emerges when people genuinely connect their role to a meaningful outcome. Principles, applied practically, create that connection.



### Sustainable Change Takes Time

The 16-week turnaround created genuine momentum and measurable early results. But momentum is not embedding. Long-term leadership commitment was still required to consolidate new behaviours, reinforce standards, and prevent regression to familiar patterns. Recovery is a beginning, not an endpoint.



**Key Change Lesson:** Transformation starts when people move from blame to ownership.

# Most Maintenance Problems Are Not Maintenance Problems

This is perhaps the most important insight the recovery delivered and the one most frequently overlooked by organisations investing in maintenance improvement. When asset performance is poor, the instinctive response is to look at the maintenance function. But maintenance performance is an outcome, not a cause. The causes lie upstream, in the organisational conditions that shape how maintenance is planned, prioritised, resourced, and executed.

## The Real Problems

- Leadership alignment failures
- Capability gaps at all levels
- Governance and accountability deficits
- Change management absence
- Cultural dysfunction left unaddressed

## The Common | Ineffective | Response

- More procedures and documentation
- More reports and dashboards
- More systems and software
- More compliance requirements
- More oversight without insight

These responses are not without value but applied to an organisation that has not addressed its underlying behavioural dynamics, they become expensive noise. Procedures are ignored. Reports are gamed. Systems are bypassed. Compliance becomes theatre. The organisation continues to underperform whilst accumulating the cost of every new initiative layered on top of an unresolved foundation.

⚠ Adding more process to a culturally misaligned organisation does not improve performance. It increases the sophistication of the dysfunction.

# Integrating Asset Management with Organisational Change

## The Structured Change Approach

Structured Change helps organisations integrate Asset Management (ISO 55001) with Organisational Change Management (ISO 10020) to create sustainable organisational capability. This integration is not merely conceptual it is practical, structured, and deliberately sequenced to match the readiness of the organisation being transformed.

The approach is led by Martin Kerr, whose career spans the full spectrum of industrial maintenance and asset management leadership from hands-on trade work to international standards development.

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### Former Maintenance Fitter and Toolmaker

Grounded in the practical realities of frontline maintenance work.

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### Maintenance Manager & Production Engineer

Experienced in bridging technical and operational leadership.

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### CEO of a Heavy Maintenance Organisation

Accountable for performance, culture, and commercial outcomes.

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### Convenor of ISO 55001:2024

Led the international revision of the global asset management standard.

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### Technical Director, World Partners in Asset Management

Advancing asset management capability globally.

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### Author

*Organisational Change Management for Asset Management* the definitive practitioner guide to integrating these disciplines.

# The Answer May Not Be Another Maintenance Procedure

## Contact Structured Change

If your organisation is struggling with contract performance, maintenance effectiveness, asset reliability, leadership alignment, or workforce engagement the root cause is unlikely to be found in your maintenance procedures. It is far more likely to be found in the organisational conditions that surround and shape every maintenance decision made each day.

Structured Change works with senior leadership teams and asset management professionals to address those conditions directly combining the rigour of ISO 55001 with the human intelligence of ISO 10020 to create organisations that are not merely compliant, but genuinely capable.



### Recover Failing Environments

Diagnose and address the real causes of maintenance underperformance.



### Align Leadership and Frontline

Create shared understanding and coordinated intent across all levels.



### Improve Stakeholder Trust

Rebuild confidence between functions, contractors, and clients.



### Deliver Measurable Outcomes

Turn strategy into behaviour and behaviour into sustainable performance.

Sustainable Asset Performance Begins with Organisational Alignment.

**Because the greatest problem is rarely the assets. It is the culture surrounding them.**