



BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

The author, of the Wilson-Oyler Group, is a 30-year industry veteran. Reach him at bwilson@questex.com.

10 steps to successful satellite yards

The industry has used satellite yards throughout its history. Personally, I have used them throughout my career. I have had mixed results, as have clients of mine. When satellite yards are successful, the benefits are very rewarding. If there are problems, however, they can be very troublesome.

Contractors usually use satellites to reduce travel time, and sometimes to add storage space. They usually satisfy that need. This benefit can be offset by some of the associated consequences.

The list of challenges that satellites create is fairly long:

- › maintaining your company culture;
- › control;
- › accidents;
- › surprises resulting in contract loss;
- › low morale;
- › equipment abuse and theft;
- › administrative issues; and
- › employee retention.

There are probably some that I have missed. Given this long list, why would someone consider this option? The reality is that there is risk to almost anything; you just have to know how to mitigate it.

Here are 10 best practices to avoid the pitfalls of satellite yards, and turn a potential problem into a worthy solution.

Contractors use satellites to **reduce travel time** and **add storage** space. When satellite yards are successful, the benefits are very rewarding.

- 1** Staff the satellite with tenured, trusted key employees.
- 2** Make sure you have systems working in your base operations that will also work in a remote location.
- 3** Management must communicate daily with the manager of the satellite.
- 4** Provide the same communication to the satellite that you provide your base employees on company news, policies, etc.
- 5** Bring the satellite employees to the base at least quarterly so they are included as part of the team.
- 6** Owners and key managers must be visible to the satellite employees at least a couple times per month.
- 7** Stock the satellite with the best and newest equipment to minimize breakdowns, which are hard to support.
- 8** Make sure you have figured out how to give shop support and maintain a preventive maintenance program.
- 9** Have management “take the temperature” of employees so that you can beware of changes in morale.
- 10** Senior management must stay close to customers to measure satisfaction.

Good management can help assure that the satellite yard is successful. If you *consistently* follow the best practices above, you will be successful.