



## Throughput Consulting, Inc. Article – for Publication

### Are You Too Comfortable in Your Niche?

Over the years, I have become acquainted with quite a number of heat treating shops and I am always delighted to see the one surprising thing most have in common: each got its start by taking on a unique and difficult job, a job that perhaps others had failed to do well, or do economically.

From here, shops added more heat treating processes and any number of additional services: Hand Blasting, Tumble Blasting, Jig Tempering, Straightening, Painting, Mag Particle and Penetrant Testing, and perhaps others, as well.

Yes, most began by meeting the needs of a niche market and then grew by adding processes, capacity and supporting services. While none of us has a crystal ball to look into the future, we can all review the past decade and know that our commercial heat treat market is shrinking as industry continues to move off shore. This leaves just two opportunities for growth: capturing captive work, and winning over existing market share.

So now we ask, “Are these traditional methods of growing the business going to work today?” We think that the answer is that these methods play a part; they ARE NECESSARY, but they are not SUFFICIENT. “Well, then,” you ask, “What is missing? What more is needed to capture both captives and market share?”

The answer is found in the need to build a vastly stronger daily working relationship between you and your customer. The tools to make this happen would provide real time, on-line free flow of accurate order status. Further, customers would have ready access to review and reprint certifications, shipping records, invoices and account status, eliminating their need to call you for duplicates.

Ask yourself these questions,

- How many calls do we take in a day asking for just this sort of information?
- How often am I or my floor supervision pulled off the floor or out of a meeting to hear just such a question?
- How much better would work flow through my shop if employees were not spending hours a day chasing down order status?
- How much better would my customers be served if the only calls we got were right to the point? (“My customer called about the tooling on your Work Order 12345. They need the assembly right



away. We see the parts are in temper. Please push them through Inspection and call when done. We'll come over and pick them up.”)

- How much time would my customers save if they could get exactly the answers they need when they need them without a call, much less the wait for your return call?
- How likely would my customers be to shop price when information and results are so readily available from you?
- Are there prospects in my market who would be attracted to the free flow of information?
- Are there companies with captive heat treating in my market who would receive better order status information and delivery performance from my shop than from their own?
- Am I too comfortable with my niche to step into the Information Age?

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