



Throughput Consulting, Inc. Article – for Publication

Managing Change, or the Pain of It All

Quite a few words have been put to paper providing advice on Managing Change and the reasons change is avoided; the reasons change is difficult to manage. Bear with me as I attempt to add a few more, something beyond these words that are by now practically clichés:

- Employees instinctively resist change.
- Not invented here.
- We don't have the capital right now.
- Business is bad.
- Business is good.
- We've cut back and we don't have the time.
- Absenteeism and turn-over is so high we don't have the time.
- What we currently do is working just fine ... why change?
- The last time we did this? It was awful.

So, enough already! There is no end to the reasons we defer doing what we know we need to do.

Have you noticed? The addition of a piece of equipment is generally well received and aggressively implemented, but a change in procedure is not. (Yep, include software among those things that are a "change in procedure.") It seems to me that the further away we get from "the furnace," the more difficult it is to **justify and make** the change. Examples? Furnace control and data collection systems; quality management systems (ISO, TS, and NADCAP); and business management systems. True? Yes! But why? Let me count the ways:

- First and foremost, the business owner – entrepreneur – manager is focused on equipment, and for good reason. Equipment is what has "made" his business. It isn't so much that the entrepreneur doesn't appreciate good quality or the office management system (he knows that they are necessary), it is that these things simply don't excite him and, as a result, changes here often lack a champion, an advocate.
- So equipment is "King." It is easy to see where a new process will result in increased sales. It is not so easy to see how good furnace control, quality, and business management systems can and will increase sales. At best, these systems are viewed by many as necessary to **prevent the loss of sales**, and accordingly, any changes are implemented grudgingly.



- Continuing the focus on equipment, it is fair to say that all of us are concerned about efficiency. Are burners adjusted for efficiency? Are loads built to utilize furnace capacity efficiently? Is there idle furnace time? Are the oil coolers working efficiently? But when we look to the efficiency of our employees, we often fail to look any further than “Is he busy?” That he is “busy” does not insure that he is either efficient or effective.
- While all improvements require change, not all changes result in improvement. For the reasons above, many changes involving systems (rather than equipment) have had their “dark side,” and anyone with prudence will remember.
- Finally, it is much too easy to say, “Why change? What we have works just fine.” Is everything really working “just fine?” How much time are you spending messing with furnace charts? Do you enjoy preparing for quality audits ... in reality, wallpapering over the holes? And how about all those phone calls from expeditors? Doing all these things and many, many more that contributes nothing to the bottom line.

All right. What to do? In our last article, we discussed bottlenecks. In our next, we will outline six steps to implementing change and in the process, introduce the “Theory of Constraints.”

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