Production management - A Production Managers Day.

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If this article seems familiar to you then your company probably needs help from the Plastics Consultancy Network.

Arrived at the usual time, early, in the hope of getting a coffee before anyone could see that I had arrived. No chance, I was collared by the day shift supervisor on the way out of the canteen; he must have been on the lookout for my arrival.

I listen for ten minutes while he gives his account of the previous shift’s problems.

*Do I have to have this every morning, why can’t they have no problems for once?*

Finally finish the coffee and manage to put on my overall.

‘OK’ I say. ‘Let’s go and look at the problems one by one on the shop floor.’

Say hello to a few people while making our way through the moulding department.

*I must make more time to talk to the employees and get to know them more.*

The quality supervisor joins us – now I have problems in both ears.

We all arrive at the first problem, a quality issue that is quickly sorted out after I agree to take full responsibility! The supervisors are happy with the outcome after much discussion about the grey areas.

*We should really sort out the customer’s specification and communicate it better to the people who are producing it. Production need ‘black/white’ or ‘acceptable/not acceptable’ not the fuzzy grey areas that keep appearing.*

On to the next problem, an intermittent short moulding keeps throwing a spanner in the works. Ask the setter what has been checked. ‘Is the machine set to the set-up sheet?’ and all the other obvious things. ‘What other parts of the process have been checked that could be responsible for the problem?’ We go through them one by one – suddenly a light goes on ‘Not checked that’.

Wait while the setter checks out the missed potential cause and ‘Bingo problem found’.

Ask the setter to monitor the machine for a period of time to make sure everything is OK.

On to the next problem a machine has broken down during the night shift, not much information left by the night shift so the maintenance engineer has to go through the
machine operations to find the problem. He needs a setter with him to keep starting and stopping the machine.

*Must look at training the maintenance people to operate the equipment.*

Ask the maintenance engineer to report back to me when the fault is found and let me know how long it will take to fix.

Move on to the next problem but get interrupted is it that time to attend a production meeting.

Usual meeting with everyone involved. I dread meetings and I always seem to come out with more problems than I went in with.

Report on the current situation with everyone present and briefly tried to look forward.

No such hope, Sales has a customer screaming down the phone about a ‘rush order’ that means an unplanned mould change. Not good news.

I am already thinking about the last time we ran this cheap import mould, I only hope it holds together or we will have more earache.

Back to the shop floor, maintenance have found the problem but do not have a replacement part, it will have to come from the manufacturer meaning more expense and lost time but at least we do not need the service engineer.

On to the final problem, a mould has broken down and needs to come out for repair. At least we can use the machine for the ‘rush job’. The toolmaker has assessed the problem but it will have to go out for repair – more unplanned expense.

The rest of the mould shop is running OK (for now). Fingers crossed, grab a sandwich and a coffee.

*Is it that time already?*

Decide to step outside and try to collect my thoughts but interrupted again by the mobile phone that I have to carry.

*Must remember to check my email today it must be overloaded by now.*

Put off the supplier who wants to come to see me to a later date and sit down in the office to eat my lunch while checking the email and counter signing purchase orders.

*How do people get your email address – the £250 million from Nigeria would come in handy and I could say goodbye to this lot.*

Start work on a justification for a replacement machine before attending a quality review to go over the recent audit.

Interrupted by the materials guy because we do not have enough colorant for the ‘rush job’. It was over used during the last run. I ask how much we have and how long it will take to get some more. I also ask if he wants to inform sales or should I tell them the good news. Surprisingly he prefers that I tell them.

Attend the quality review, more problems, mainly with the paperwork not filled in correctly by the temporary operators that come and go.

*Must see the shift supervisors about getting the operators to fill in the paperwork correctly.*
Decide to arrange a meeting with the shift supervisors – it will give us a chance to discuss the operators training that we want to carry out (amongst other things).

*Cannot remember when we had the last meeting.*

Finally decide to switch off the mobile – its way past five o’clock and everyone else has gone home.

Consult my ‘THINGS TO DO’ list from yesterday. Untouched. The same has the day before – transfer it over to tomorrow where it will probably also remain untouched.

Decide to do the justification at home.

Finish up for the day and head for the exit. On my way out find a bag of polymer spilt over the floor.

*More waste and expense.*

Track down the afternoon shift supervisor to ask him to get the mess cleaned up because it’s a safety hazard.

Discuss the waste issue with the supervisors at the meeting we’re going to have.

Arrive home, kick the cat, shout at the kids, argue with the wife about being late for dinner and finally fall asleep in my favourite chair.

Just another normal day.

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