

Time for a Mid Year Tune Up



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It is certainly shaping up to be another fast moving calendar year. Depending on geography, some metal finishing operations have left behind cold weather related challenges. These same facilities are now ready to deflect the heat of summer, before autumn eventually cools things down again. As we approach the mid-year transition period, which connects us between January 1 and December 31, the time is optimum to review what we have achieved and what is next. There are certainly many individual projects and priorities to keep us busy. In the mix are sure to be some general items for action, which could be of the "SOU" class (sense of urgency). The use of electronic devices, such as cell phones and computers, are a normal part of daily work. These technological devices continually improve, offering better levels of service and response. More and more, industry depends on their use and effectiveness. We can include them into the "SOU" class.

Communication

Providing the required information for the subject at hand isn't so much priceless as it is essential. The focus of this interpretation shines on the use of and best implementation of communication devices. Do you recall the use of and importance of telex? How many of us cannot comprehend just how industry functioned before fax machines? We have, thanks to the development of new electronic gadgetry, many devices to choose from. Cell phones have added features for text messaging, e-mailing, photography, etc. An example of rapid response to problem solving follows. A plater determines there is a geometric curve to a part that might hinder the ability to achieve a specified finish. Using the cell phone, the plater photographs the problem area and sends it to the customer with a text message. The customer's staff examines the information and in a return message, suggests a modification. The plater responds affirmatively as long as a few minor cycle changes can be made.



The customer responds with an OK. This full exchange could have wrapped up in less than an hour. The "old method" would have required a representative to travel in person, or the part to be shipped back, so that the problem could be analyzed then corrected, perhaps in a few days. Time saved with the new gadgetry is precious time to earn an income.

At times we find ourselves "on the run". When this occurs, the new cordless handheld devices allow us to send and receive e-mails, log on to the internet, and have a sense of a mobile office.

Information technology

The internet is a vast storage warehouse of general information. By searching the subject matter of interest, one undoubtedly "hits" on to several publicized sources. I have found this to be most helpful in just about any project or subject of interest. Metal finishers have the ability to contact a supplier through their websites, NASF and its various educational and publication sites, other professional organizations, hotlines and forums. Several of these groups of sources provide automatic updates for subjects of interest. Written periodicals, journals, publications (such as *P&SF*), books, audio / visual presentations, also provide useful information that at times is critical to success. Of course, one of the best individual sources of information can be our own record keeping. Past projects

may have presented specific problems that were corrected, after a certain amount of quality time was spent. Once again, time saved can be realized by referencing what we have experienced in the past. Why reproduce the past if it is a lesson to the future?

Jobs and record keeping

Many companies operate according to specific certifications, such as ISO 9001-2000. For this reason, record keeping, tracking and general filing of data is very friendly towards certification guidelines. Incoming parts for processing can be logged in by bar coding. The accompanying paper work may print out the metal finishing cycle, including work loads, operating parameters of specific baths and other pertinent information. Applicable quality control testing may be included, along with each approval along the cycle progression. Software stores the data. Final paperwork can be e-mailed directly to the customer, along with a hard copy accompanying the shipped parts.

In-house and supplier analysis reports can be electronically filed for reference. Price quotes, technical literature, certificates of compliance and other documents are quickly and efficiently sent out.

Security

Companies amass a vast quantity of useful, needed and most importantly confidential information. It is vital to success to prevent damage or possible retrieval by other parties. That is why software companies and internet providers offer security measures that are very beneficial to the user. It is in the user's best interest to investigate the availability of appropriate safeguards, and make optimal use of them. *P&SF*