

coop



Co-op lorries at Castlewood Depot.

# Progressive in every aspect

Work study is alive and kicking. We examine the latest major work study project in a progressive business, using a progressive technique in an innovative way to create a legacy for the future.

The Co-op has more than 2800 stores across the UK – one in every UK postal area. Supplies to these stores come via nine distribution centres (DCs) that are strategically located throughout the UK.

Having recently re-branded the Co-op with an iconic and contemporary identity, the spotlight in the food business turned to the role and contribution of work study. Rob Roy, a highly experienced industrial engineer, was appointed earlier this year as the work measurement specialist in the logistics central operations, to spearhead a major review of time standards throughout the food business in the UK.

Based at Newhouse in north Lanarkshire, Rob's goal is to have a fully operational database of all categories of work within the DCs, which are located at Castlewood north of Derby, Avonmouth, Andover, Plymouth, Birtley (Durham), Lea Green near St Helens, Thurrock and Cardinal near Huntingdon, as well as Newhouse itself.

Planning was undertaken to identify what level of detail was required and what techniques would be the most suitable to measure all the activities in the depots, as well as the procedures, timelines and data analysis. The MOST® technique (Maynard Operation Sequence Technique) was identified and selected as the best provider of such detail, accuracy and consistency of results. Moreover, Rob was aware that MOST® is a technique which could be readily explained to others who were not familiar with work measurement – another vital factor.

### Transparency and inclusivity

As a business, the Co-op cares about its colleagues; it has identified four 'ways of being co-op', encouraging its colleagues to 'succeed together', to 'show you care', to 'be yourself, always' and 'do what matters most'. Consequently, it has been essential to work in a collaborative way on this project, helping others to understand the need to focus on productivity and what that would involve.

Accordingly, Rob invited Scott-Grant Limited to deliver a series of two day productivity appreciation courses called 'Managing performance based on measured work content'. Team leaders, supervisors and union reps from various DCs attended the course where they learned about the need for work measurement generally, as well as the structure of a time study. They were then given an overview of the MOST® technique, to see the importance of methods; they learned about the basic principles of Lean and how to manage effective performance. It was considered an important part of the project to give a flavour of what was happening, how it relates to productivity improvement and how it fits in with the Co-op's five year plan. Feedback from the course was excellent; everyone seemed to readily appreciate the open, transparent and inclusive way the project was being handled.

Rob had looked at the whole engagement process with USDAW, the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers and again took a progressive route forward by inviting two of their people to attend the five day course at Scott-Grant to train to be a MOST® analyst. Ian Scullion, Head of Management Services and Amanda Cadwallader, Work Study Officer, joined Rob and two of his colleagues on the MOST® course. (Readers may remember Amanda was a 'Student of the Year' for 2013, having studied the IMS Certificate course



With their official certificates and MOST® Analyst cards, (left to right) Amanda Cadwallader, Rob Roy, Ian Scullion, Simon Howe, Duncan McDermott.

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to help her in her new role, which she has since embraced with great enthusiasm.)

Simon Howe, Head of Logistics Central Operations at the Co-op and Duncan McDermott, who is responsible for the management of the productivity systems, brought the total up to five who attended the MOST® course, so that they all could understand the detail of the project as it rolled out.

The work measurement project has been undertaken by a team of experienced and qualified MOST® analysts and industrial engineers provided by Scott-Grant. This team is generating the time data for all the DC activities. With MOST®, work content is established by analysing the method which generates the time, and this is delivering additional benefits to the business. Duncan McDermott explained: "MOST® also enables us to predict or model scenarios so we have an ideal method development tool as well as a method improvement tool."

Although MOST® is now the primary work measurement technique, activity sampling and production studies using Tectime are still undertaken by the Co-op for validation and





The Co-op's support centre, 1 Angel Square, Manchester

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to establish frequencies and contingencies.

"With this database we will be able to develop the productivity levels of the business on an ongoing basis. We are running it in conjunction with the Manhattan warehouse and labour management systems, so it will allow depots to better plan manpower levels using standard times. Crucially, it will also give us the ability to provide faster and more reliable data for the change management team to develop and progress change over time," explained Simon Howe.

Also an experienced IE, Howe is another comparatively new appointment, brought in to strengthen the focus on productivity. He commented: "The project is running well and on time with a comprehensive database covering all warehousing activities available within eight weeks of the project commencing. We're delighted with the level of information that we've managed to gain already, which will be a tremendous help to achieving our productivity goals."

From USDAW, Ian Scullion said: "USDAW is one of the most progressive trade unions in the TUC and welcomes any new technology that improves the way in which we work. We also

welcome the invitation from the Co-operative not only to collaborate with them on this new work study project but to be trained in the use of this alternative work study technique. It marks a significant shift in company-union relationships which, generally, tend to be fraught and frustrating. It's much more productive and progressive when working in harmony to the same objective." Amanda Cadwallader agreed: "When we discuss work targets we will now be focussing on the method and any site-specific issues that could be getting in the way of staff achieving the targets, rather than what has or hasn't been communicated or how the targets have been derived, which quite often clouds the real issues."

A Fellow of the Institute of Management Services, Rob Roy has seen many changes to the profession over the 35 or so years he has been an IE professional. "Work study is alive and kicking. I want people to know that progressive companies within the UK like the Co-op are actively engaged in using and promoting work study as an effective and vital part of managing a business."