It's the right time for time standards

There seems to be a regularly increasing number of organisations – and fairly substantial ones at that – who are focusing on accurate time standards.

Readers of this Journal will understand the classic reasons for time standards – manning, planning, costing, targeting and all kinds of performance measures – and therefore welcome the now regular increase in their stature and credibility.

As a provider of productivity specialists to all sectors, Scott-Grant quote a few recent examples to illustrate that the need for sophistication in the application of time data is becoming highly significant.

A major aerospace manufacturer was looking for ways to be more competitive as they approached a significant contract renewal. In monitoring the sequence of processes in the work in question, a productivity specialist identified some significant facts: because of the layout in the area, in five days over 4500 steps were walked by operatives, carrying nothing, so adding no value at all. Based on a 60 man/day shift operation it equated to a one third total wasted capacity.

Already applying industrial engineering techniques to derive time standards throughout an international automotive manufacturer seemed encouraging. But it transpired that the time standards were being generated in a number of different ways so the company had no consistent basis for comparison. They needed an accurate and consistent way to identify differences in measurement, not in approach, which they now have by using the MOST® technique throughout their organisation in ten different countries.

By contrast, a high volume manufacturer was operating their manufacturing process in line with lean principles and had a matrix of time values for all their different activities for manning, planning, costing etc, as described above. They had justified the need for a lot of new plant but found that their recent investment just hadn't created the planned capacities. It took an external productivity specialist to help them identify the cause, viz that they didn't know which were their critical operations. By reviewing as much of their time data as possible, the specialist was able to replace it with time standards to enable them to identify the bottlenecks in the manufacturing process and improve and release further capacity.

A major food manufacturer needed accurate data to assess whether they could derive sufficient benefit from an investment of £850,000 to install a new conveyor system. A number of variations to the packaging had been introduced to respond to different retail spaces available in supermarkets, filling stations etc. The need to increase capacity and throughput to meet demand had resulted in their engineers constantly increasing the speed of the conveyor system, thereby putting undue pressure on the bearings and rollers in the switching mechanism. Objective and experienced productivity specialists were able to calculate the conveyor capacity and to identify the best utilisation of the current equipment. Using accurate and consistent time standards and other industrial engineering techniques they were able to prove there was no need for further investment.

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The 21st century industrial engineer is one who has a comprehensive toolbag of techniques to enable them to determine consistent and accurate time standards and apply the data in a correct and meaningful way. Having built a database of structured time standards, the delighted managing director of a hi-tech finishing plant confirmed they had seen 'a staggering 92% increase in our productivity'.

Meaningful time standards are the backbone of industry, across all sectors. The speed with which accurate time data can be generated and applied nowadays is particularly impressive. When they are used correctly, time standards will streamline operations, create efficiencies and improve performance and processes. They surely are just what businesses in this and every country need. The time for time standards is now.

More is more

Many people responsible for production lines or processes know instinctively that they should be able to get more out of their equipment or their people, but they're not sure how to determine or prove it.