



PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF: A 35% PRODUCTIVITY INCREASE IN JUST 7 MONTHS!



Profile

Plus Pack is an international packaging company which manufactures one of Europe's largest ranges of quality aluminium foil and plastic containers for food products. Two production facilities with large capacity and centrally located warehouse facilities in Europe guarantee customers a high degree of delivery reliability and flexibility. Plus Pack's main production sites are located in Genk in Belgium and Odense in Denmark. The group employs 300 people around the world in its production and sales companies.

The Productivity Gap

Benchmarking between Plus Pack's production sites highlighted considerably lower levels of productivity at the Odense plant. A combination of high downtime on the presses and non-fulfilment of planned production volumes led to Plus Pack instigating two separate change programmes with consultancy companies over the past 5 years, but both projects failed to deliver the desired results. Understandably, these projects had created tension and scepticism amongst employees about the use of external consultants. Despite these setbacks, Plus Pack continued to believe that there was significant potential in Odense, but they were unable to create the right motivation in the organisation to transfer this potential into bottom line results. The management again looked externally for help, and recalling a successful project in the 1980's with the Anpro MD Sean O'Hara, Plus Pack invited Anpro to conduct an analysis of the Odense Site.

The analysis identified that scope existed to significantly improve labour utilisation in both the factory and administrative areas, and that further savings could be made in the external maintenance budget. These improvements would be achieved through reducing downtime and increasing productivity via:

- Better planning
- Better technical service from the trouble-shooters
- Better maintenance of dies and technical equipment
- Better combinations of multi-machine operations
- Better communication and motivation

Implementation and Involvement

The project focused on understanding the reasons behind the better results in the Belgium production plant and on capturing the technical knowledge underpinning these results. This combined with Anpro's tools for motivation and involvement led to a 115-point "Early wins" programme that was identified and implemented during the project. An "easy to read" production handbook described the different operations, meetings and tools that were implemented during the project, and also served as an "audit handbook" for future follow-up.

Plus Pack established goals for run-hours per working hour, downtime for presses and number of presses per operator and changeover times were dramatically reduced by adopting SMED (Single Minute Exchange of Dies) principles. Working with KPI's and Management By Objectives made it possible for supervisors, production operatives and management to be aware of the results of their shift before leaving the factory. This gave Plus Pack the opportunity to identify problems during the shift, allowing them to understand productivity drivers and create action plans to improve performance.

Throughout the process local union representatives were constantly consulted to ensure employee involvement and ownership.

Results

Supplying the organisation with up-to-date information has created a basis for continuous improvement. The project generated **efficiency improvements in excess of 35%** and **reduced downtime by approximately 40%** over a period of 7 months. Furthermore, a request from the sales department for a wider product-mix to is now being met and Plus Pack has the production capacity for new products and customers.

With highly motivated employees and increased levels of efficiency, Plus Pack is a more flexible and agile organisation and is ready to make further improvements to meet the competition for the benefit of both the company and employees.

