

Continuous Improvement

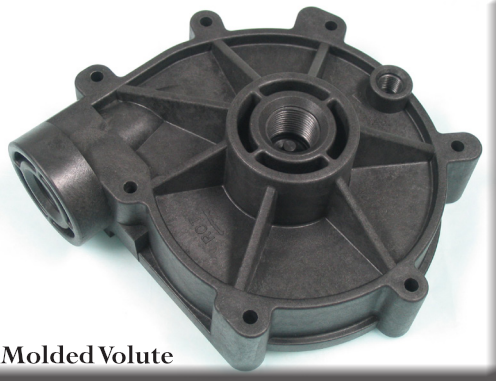
By Stephen Hannemann

Since the economic crash of 2007 and 2008, manufacturing in the United States has experienced radical restructuring. Manufacturers have invested in the most advanced and sophisticated equipment, bolstered quality systems, and revamped assembly lines and shop floors to streamline workflow and throughput. Continuous improvement took on a whole new dynamic

with the makeup of CI campaigns covering all facets of manufacturing.

Forward-thinking shop owners and managers are now taking CI another quantum step further by suggesting continuous improvement

must be personal. Personal growth or personal continuous improvement is paramount – from ownership down the management chain, through production personnel, all the way to the man or woman at the shipping dock. For owners and managers, the ability to inspire and empower will transform your organization to higher levels of achievement. Ever since I started my pattern making apprenticeship in 1961, I have maintained



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that a company's most valuable asset is its employees. People make your business! Invest in your people.

Several months ago I spent three days giving talks at a company that was experiencing an abnormal percentage of reject parts. My opening at those meetings went as follows: "When you first open eyes in the morning, do you jump out of bed and say, 'Oh boy! I get to go to the plant today and make products that will be used by millions of people all around the world!' Or – do you do you roll over and say or think, 'Oh God, do I have to go to work today?'" You can imagine the varied expressions on the employees' faces. The first response is an attitude of gratitude. The second is an attitude of entitlement. Keeping this article in a positive vein, I won't go into the negatives of an entitlement mindset. I do not have a Pollyanna view about life, and being in manufacturing all my working life, I full understand how events



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arise that are not conducive to every day being a happy party. Nor do I believe in a tight skilled labor market that owners or managers should infer the employees are damn lucky to have a job.

Over the next several issues in this column, I will share a series of articles on personal continuous improvement, on how positive attitudes will improve quality, throughput and profitability, by inspiring and empowering people throughout your organization. To keep the articles visually interesting, I will include photos of challenging parts and projects requiring positive and solution-oriented attitudes from owners, managers, and employees to achieve successful outcomes. The companies that excel are the ones that understand people are their most important asset and are taking continuous improvement a step further.

Photos courtesy of 3D Plastics, Newberg, OR. For information about 3D Plastics or all manufacturing services represented by SMH Inc., visit www.smhincllc.com, phone, 425.501.7342, email stephen@smhincllc.com.

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