UNDERSTANDING THE CONTINUATION OF POOR QUALITY AND LOW PRODUCTIVITY IN AMERICAN MANUFACTURING OPERATIONS

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The purpose of this report is to help some industry leaders from the more productive countries to avoid being trapped in the same dilema when they strive to build successful manufacturing facilities in the USA. Questions and answers will communicate vital realities.

Q. What are the practices which have grown in American Industry which result in poor quality and low productivity?

A. Often the "thought leaders" among manufacturing operations personell take the viewpoint that they are on one team and plant management is on an opposing team.

Q. How does that operate?

A. Management wants high quality and a high production rate. It becomes a game or "sport" for individuals, then for groups of individuals to show their peers that they can develop means for producing well below potentials in quantities and qualities and can "get away with it". Thousands of employees follow this "game plan" and feel that they would be discriminated against by the group if they did otherwise.

Q. Explain further by an example.

A. (All of the examples related are from good personal friends and personally - and in complete confidence related)
"I worked on an assembly job on the night shift. There were 10 or 12 in our assembly group. The expected production rate was set at 90 per hour with a bonus if we exceeded it. Bonus was about 10% if we averaged 100 per hour. So we usually ran 100 and got the bonus. We could easily do 200 per hour, so we waited an hour or so until after the daytime supervisors were all gone, then we ran at 200 per hour for a few hours. Then, each of us had found places where we could sleep, so we went and got several hours of sleep on our shift".

Q. Lets have another example.

A. This man was a welder. I noticed that he was at home, working around his home so much, I asked him, "how come"? He said, "I'm welding some steel parts together to make up a frame. I have a certain allotment for each week and turn them in at the end of each week. They are timed and planned for one hour each. I easily can do them in ½ hour. So I make up as many ahead as I need and can have spare time any time I want it. I check in right at the end of the week."
I asked him, "Why did they have the rate wrongly set? Why didnt they have production set at two per hour"? He answered, "There are many ways to do a job. They came and timed me, and watched me work. I put it together sensibly and worked continuously for an hour on each Of course I put it together a different way when they're gone."

Q. With intelligent supervisory people around who are interested in getting out production, how come some didnt note the amount of "spare time" or the short time it took to weld up an assembly?

A."It is positively forbidden. That would come under the restriction against "Taking a Time Study From A Balcony". Nothing can be used in rate setting, or in discussions of rates, unless it is data taken after I have been told that the person is there to time the operatio and to observe the way it is being done."

Q. You spoke also of Quality being lowered. Give an example of how Qua ity is lowered.

A."When I started work on an assembly line of a fairly new product I was carefully taught exactly how to assemble my small part. Then I was taken to each of the five places right ahead of me and shown, also thoughly just what each person assembled and what resulted after he was finished and passed it along. I was told to carefully look at each assembly that came to me to see if those items before me were properly done. We all did that. We were also given a quality bonus for the group if quality was tops. It could amount to about 10%. We always worked for it and got it. Changes occured. We were told that assembly was our job - that quality was the inspectors job. Our quality bonus was ended."

UPDATE

ELLIE REPORTS (CONT) ELLIE MASON

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Mr. Lawrence C. Miles

in Anerkennung seiner Verdienste um die Arbeiten auf dem Gebiet der Wertanalyse, die dem VDI-Gemeinschaftsausschuß Wertanalyse starke Impulse gegeben haben.

In recognition of his meritorious work in the field of Value Analysis which has given strong impulse to the VDI Value Analysis Committee

Düsseldorf, den 9. November 1981
Dussenldorf the 9th of November 1981

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