

Dr. Die Cast



Should This Be the Die Caster's Coat of Arms? (It's Their Fault!)

Things have been running relatively smooth but you just received an e-mail from a very irate customer notifying you that they received excessively defective castings in their last shipment. Your presence is expected at their plant to explain to their management how this could possibly happen. Meanwhile you are working overtime to build a replacement shipment to avoid shutting down their production lines.

You call your management team together to do a problem solving exercise, possibly an 8D, "Five Why's" or any of a number of other methods. Instead of possible solutions, you get 30 reasons (translate that excuses) why it couldn't possibly be the responsibility of their department. You get what one of my clients refers to as the "Die Caster's Coat of Arms."



"It's Their Fault!"

The Maintenance Department blames Manufacturing for abusing the machine, Process Engineering blames Maintenance for poor machine performance, the Tooling Department blames Manufacturing for abusing "their tool," the Quality Department

blames Manufacturing for neglecting their procedures, Management blames Quality for failing to "catch" the "0.1% defect" that arrived at the customer and Engineering blames the Sales Department for accepting unreasonable product standards, and on it goes. But wait, what is a manager to do? After all, your customer only wants the quality you agreed to provide. But what if the quality level your customer is expecting is 6 Sigma capability, 25 PPM or better?

First, accept the fact that most people are trying their best to do a good job with the tools, training and equipment available. For example, several years ago I was "warned" about how unmotivated and just plain incompetent the workforce was at my new company. I simply ignored the warnings and went to work identifying the needs of the operators, maintenance, tooling and supervisory people. Six months later, that same workforce had doubled their productivity and reduced their scrap and downtime. Was it motivation, training, or huge capital investments? Certainly there were physical repairs required to the facility, dies and equipment, but that was minor compared to simply providing people with the information (technical training) and the environment where they could succeed.

Dr. W. Edwards Deming made several points that still apply today. Perhaps the most important for many in today's management is "Constancy of Purpose toward improvement of the product and service." Management in some companies could be used as an example of adult "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder" (ADHD). They bounce from one crisis or project

to another without ever completing any of them. In the opening example, there is little chance of achieving a long term solution for the problem.

Why? Because the program was probably prematurely delegated to Manufacturing to "figure out and maintain", that is until it was proven unmanageable. At that point it was the team's responsibility to figure it out and arrive at "**an irreversible corrective action**" (in 24 to 48 hours). Complex, high performance products require coordinated efforts, not just by a few individuals, but from everyone who is involved with the program. One might say there are no "innocent bystanders." It's not "someone else's job." Success in a company is exactly coordinated efforts; it is a result of everyone's effort working together toward common goals. It starts with asking people what they need to do their jobs better. You might be surprised at the response. It might not be nearly as expensive as the scrap, rework and unhappy customers.

How about adopting the following as our Coat of Arms.



"No Finger Pointing Allowed"

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