

THE DUNCAN DISPATCH

JULY 2009 EDITION

The GREENING of an Industry by Gary Weldon

I have to admit that it is with great reluctance that I venture into any conversation involving GREEN anything. My views on this hot-button topic have been negatively skewed by those who shamelessly exploit the true need for environmental stewardship for selfish gain and personal ambition. Sometimes it's just hard for me to see past all the clamor of alarmism and hype.



Over the last year, though, I've seen this conversation shift from the environmentalist and the regulator to the

engineer and the consumer and I've discovered that one particular Green area deserves my consideration and maybe yours as well. That is, Green Manufacturing. Let's take a look at what this budding trend is all about.

The term Green Manufacturing may not be familiar but I'm confident that you have heard of the phonetically similar, Lean Manufacturing. Some trend watchers feel that Green may be the next logical step to Lean, becoming a natural extension of the system that has had such a transforming influence on U.S. and global manufacturing. The two models share a common theme of reduction (With Lean's focus on Inefficiency) but Green views things with a much wider lens. While Lean's focus may be on zero defects, Green aims for things such zero landfill waste, carbon emissions and energy grid use.

The Green Manufacturing concept could be summarized by the phrase, "Less is More". The goal, simply put, is to eliminate or reduce the negative impact of the manufacturing process. A short list of desired objectives is: **Reduced energy usage, Minimized waste, Improved employee safety and Reuse of materials.** You may have heard this referred to as Sustainable Manufacturing, which can be defined as manufacturing that could be continued indefinitely without causing any ultimate harm.

It is important to note that Green Manufacturing is not just the production of environmentally friendly goods, but instead covers the entire manufacturing cycle from design to delivery. It is not just a procedural afterthought, but a mindset that permeates an organization beginning with product development, continuing throughout manufacturing all the way to packaging and logistics.

While the terminology may be new, some concepts of Green Manufacturing are not. Henry Ford, the industrial pioneer, is crediting with the following:

"...we will not so lightly waste material simply because we can reclaim it - for salvage involves labor. The ideal is to have nothing to salvage."

And in all fairness, our industry has been active for decades in recycling and reuse initiatives. Steel products today are commonly understood to have at least 25% recycled content and most credible U.S. manufacturers have extensive fluid reclamation programs.

For the manufacturer, the purported benefits of Green Manufacturing go beyond the obvious, yet important, environmental protections. Many have found improved operations, competitive advantage and significant savings. For example, IBM, a leader in Green Manufacturing, saved nearly \$20M in 2007 through their energy conservation programs.

Implementation can be as easy as applying the familiar Reduce, Reuse, Recycle method to your operations and the potential areas for improvement are limitless. Industry experts have noted that simple things like keeping a plant's compressed air system in tune and turning off water circulation pumps on the weekend can save tens of thousands of dollars each year.

There is a lot of room for growth in Green Manufacturing. According to a recent survey, only 35% of manufacturers are actively practicing Green and have written policies in place. On the upside, 65% of those surveyed plan to make energy-efficient investments in 2009.

With an honest look, I've found that the pursuit of Greener manufacturing is not just about making a political statement, or developing a new marketing strategy, but instead makes good overall business sense. Who can truthfully say that using less energy and less natural resources with less waste while safely producing more quality goods isn't beneficial to your bottom line. It just also happens to be good for the environment and very, well... **GREEN.**

What do you think? Email me at Gary@DuncanTool.com.

For more information on this topic you can check out a large selection of relevant articles at www.IndustryWeek.com. Just type "Green" in the keyword search.

Editors Note: Duncan Tool, Inc. is committed to doing its part to be an environmentally responsible member of the global manufacturing community.

With Green
Manufacturing
Less = More

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Product Spotlight

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Feedback

We value your input. Won't you take a minute and let us know how we can better serve you?

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