

FALL 2007 **Daman**29 ISSUE

CELEBRATING 31 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS INNOVATION



in this issue

- More than drilling holes in blocks
- Interactive Situational Leadership
- Training and thoughtful planning
- Eliminating inventory woes
- Outlook by Larry Davis

Manifold production is more than “drilling holes in blocks.”

With the recent addition of another new machine, Daman’s capacity to produce standard and custom manifolds is at its highest point. And while some in the industry are apprehensive about the future and predict an inevitable recession, company personnel see the machine itself as only one part of the big picture.



DamanFEATURE

There are a couple of restaurant analogies that serve to differentiate the Daman philosophy as it relates to the manifold business. 1. *Do you want to go to a cafeteria and pick out your own food, or do you want to be seated and taken care of?* 2. *Do you want good food or do you want good service?*

The Daman answer? You don’t have to choose.

“We’re 180° away from manufacturers that ‘drill holes in blocks,’ ” said Gordon Weiler, Sales Manager. “Yes, we now have greater capacity for delivery, but we also are geared up to offer even better full service to our customers. That’s comparing apples to oranges with companies that just focus on the product.”

Weiler noted that when a manifold leaves the shop, it’s clean, construction plugs are installed, and parts are individually packaged. “We add value,” he said. “When the customer opens the package, the manifold can be used immediately. There is nothing else he has to do.”

Matt Giloth, WinWork Manager, added that a new machine was purchased in order to stay ahead of orders. “We processed twice as many orders in the first four months of this year than we did the year before. It was a bit of a struggle to keep up, but with the new machine and the addition of a new designer to our staff, we’ve been able to catch up and continue to provide the customer service we’re known for.”

“It’s always a bit of a risk to offer custom design work and on-time delivery, but that’s what sets us apart. We have to be flexible, because we don’t know what our customers will need,



DamanFEATURE

Hydraulic Valve

Manifold News

“Always dream and shoot higher than you know you can do. Don’t bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try to be better than yourself.” --William Faulkner

nor when they’ll need it. Holding up our end of the bargain is part of our philosophy,” said Weiler.

He relates that the “old school” idea of forcing customers to do what manufacturers want them to do is no longer applicable. “Now we say, ‘You tell us what you want and we’ll make the process efficient for YOU.’ ” He uses the quote process as an example.

“Manufacturers have been trained to say, ‘I’ll give you this price if you want 100.’ We say, ‘You tell me how many you want and we’ll give you the price.’ We tailor what we do to the customers’ wishes – not the opposite.”

Changing mindsets regarding added value.

Daman customers were not the first ones to have their

opinions changed regarding value. Before that could happen, it had to happen within the walls at Daman. “Each and every person here has to believe that value and service are the determining factors behind everything we do – the decisions we make, the results that we expect of ourselves and others, and the relationships we forge,” said Larry Davis, Daman President.

“It’s a culture shift that we’re committed to, and one that we know will keep our current customers and attract new ones. We live it, and that shows through to our customers,” Davis said.

Thoughts on training from a Cell Leader.

Thom Sibley is a 10-year Daman leader who is a firm believer in training – from the first day on the job until the last day on the job. And he believes that Daman keeps getting better at the process.

“We want our employees to not only DO their tasks well, but to first understand HOW and WHY they’re doing their tasks well. As a Cell Leader – and as a teacher – my job is to make sure we turn out high-quality products in the most cost-efficient way. That means streamlining all processes.”

He compares the learning process to driving a car. We turn on the key, use the brakes and turn lights – and just

drive! We do it automatically with no conscious thought of what we’re doing. We just do what’s necessary.



“It’s the same at Daman,” he said. “When we’re first learning, we think about how to hold the deburring knife, for example, and think about the checklist of steps that need to be completed. At the next level, we JUST DO.”

Sibley added that proficiency comes from increased knowledge.

“When employees become proficient at their tasks and skills, they gain confidence and efficiency. That translates into better workers and better products.”

Interactive Situational Leadership adds to management skills.

*In the Fall 2006 issue of this newsletter,**

Dave Thomas, Daman's Quality Assurance Manager and a Cell Leader, shared his insights after being trained in Interactive Situational Leadership. His education came during his training as a Chief Petty Officer in the Navy.

*Daman*PERSPECTIVE

When Dave Thomas returned from active duty to his job at Daman, he knew that his most recent Navy training was something that would be beneficial to his co-workers. And he was not at all surprised that his previous leadership training with the Total Quality Management program and Daman's LEAN philosophy were the perfect lead-ins to Situational Leadership.

Thomas was already aware that Daman had dismissed a "top-down" management style that is still in place at many companies, but it was news to find out that the Navy had stepped back from that style as well. "Even the Navy is promoting techniques that businesses such as Daman use to empower employees. In Situational Leadership, managers learn how to communicate with employees 'where they are' in order to lead them toward self-reliance," said Thomas.

To date, Daman's Production Team and all of the Shift Leaders, Human Resources and Continuous Improvement personnel have taken the 6-to-10-hour online course. In addition, the group met weekly for five weeks to discuss the program and share their learning experiences. Participants found that group discussions helped to put the material into "more digestible chunks." Ten other leaders will be working through Situational Leadership II before the end of the year. Additional training is also planned for the production leaders.

Peak performance means adjusting mentoring methods.

Mike Boots, Shift Leader, summarizes the training format and philosophy behind Ken Blanchard's programs. "First of all, the online aspect is very accommodating to our work schedules since we work different shifts and need to have access to the learning when it's convenient. We began by being very specific as we identified the types of individuals we work with. Some are enthusiastic, some are cautious, and others are already self-reliant. Then we learned how to best reach each type of person. Since not everyone is at the same level, it's important to adjust our mentoring methods to help each person become a peak performer."

Thomas was able to see first-hand how Situational Leadership developed self-direction in people and looks forward to watching it work at Daman. "The interactive feedback format of the course is especially helpful. It offers real-life scenarios in its systematic approach. I still feel that Daman is 'ahead of the pack' as far as management understanding that employees who make their own decisions are happier people. Self-reliance translates into the personal accountability that we expect from everyone here," said Thomas.

**Visit <http://www.damanifolds.com> and go to Newsletters/Issue 26 to read article.*

Training program begins with thoughtful planning.

This newsletter article could be subtitled “Training: Chapter One.” That’s because it outlines only the planning process, not the implementation nor the results. Those elements will be addressed at a later date. For now, we look back at the last five months.



When questioned about the planning process for Daman’s new, comprehensive training program, team members who worked on the project looked at each other and said, almost in unison, “It was a LOT of work!”

That’s actually a good thing. Anyone who has been on the receiving end of training that was ill-conceived and poorly executed will understand the importance of planning. That’s why the team met every week for five months – at least three hours at a time – building the training plan. “We knew the importance of training new hires. That’s a given. But what we wanted to tighten up was consistent training for *everyone*,” said Neil Henderson, a 16-year employee who oversees continuous improvement and training.

On the heels of a recently revamped new-employee orientation program, Henderson knew the importance of having the right people involved. He worked with Krysten Shoulders, Human Resources Manager; Matt Henkler, IT; and the Cell Leaders to make sure that the program would be consistent across all cells.

“We wanted to guarantee that whatever procedures we decided on would add to the Standard Operating Procedure, giving background information and knowledge behind each task. In many plans, the trainer has the information, but not everyone is trained the same way. It was important to make everything consistent,” said Shoulders.

Henkler added, “We ran into the same problem we always do whenever we implement something new. We look around, visit other companies, check for off-the-shelf programs. The result is always the same: Nothing works as well as what we can do in-house.” His assignment was to create a software program that puts trainees in charge of their own training. Each person logs in his or her own training, thus being personally accountable.

Training that fits the Daman philosophy.

Every shop employee will have a two-year training plan. That includes new hires, as well as veteran employees, and will focus on all the preparatory steps involved before running a machine. Software will track training by occurrence, not by time, and will be consistent.

Thom Sibley, Cell Leader, notes how this program mirrors the Daman philosophy of consistently evaluating and updating processes, as well as demanding accountability and improvement at every level. “The idea is sound. It boils down to individuals setting goals and following through on what they say they will do. Self-accountability isn’t always easy, but tracking that is a key element of the training. All Cell Leaders will have to focus carefully on their roles as well.”

Look for updates as we begin Chapter Two of this program.

Trigger System eliminates inventory woes, solidifies business relationships.

Mountains of custom inventory, scrap inventory because of design changes, and suppliers' poor delivery performance are no longer obstacles with Daman's Trigger System.



Delivery second to none is the goal of Daman's Trigger System. And from what we're hearing in the industry, it's a revolutionary inventory management system that offers a win-win solution that our customers appreciate.

Gordon Weiler, Daman Sales Manager, admits that old habits die hard, so he spends a good deal of time educating customers about the benefits they will realize if they just give the system a try. "We move them from the old-school philosophy of buying six months' worth of manifolds and carrying the inventory themselves to trusting us to ship product when they need it. Once they try it, they're sold," he said.

The Trigger System provides a way to eliminate overhead cost from a typical ordering process, and that efficiency is passed on by offering quantity bracket prices from custom quotes while maintaining very few, if any, parts in stock. Weiler says there are "no blanket orders required, no scheduled shipments, and distributor inventory can be eliminated." Best of all, cash flow improves.

Distributor Advantages With The Daman Trigger System

- Improves supply chain effectiveness
- Inventory always available
- Capital/floor space available for other uses
- Reduced inventory
- More stable pricing
- Improved cash flow
- Forecast elimination
- Faster response to design change

The Trigger System is exclusive to Daman Products Company and supports its commitment to accountability in customer service, product quality and technical expertise. For more information, contact Gordon Weiler at gordonw@damanifolds.com or call toll free at 800-959-7841.



Investing in people.

By Larry M. Davis

Counterintuitive is a word that keeps turning up in Daman's world of continuous improvement, and training has now taken on its own form of counter-intuitiveness. Throughout this issue you have read about the process of improving our operational training systems. Assessing, modifying, and redeploying is just another day at the office for an organization focused on improving. But what if the most profound training a company can offer its people actually benefits them first and the company second?

Continuous improvement seeks to understand root causes of problems at the system level before making changes that result in truly improving the system in a sustainable way. What is the value of operational training if the people being trained are struggling with life issues we are all faced with from time to time? It is a natural progression in a culture dedicated to improvement to help mitigate these "non-business" issues for everyone's benefit.

To that end, Daman is investing in and encouraging all employees to participate in programs that are available on a voluntary basis: medical and lifestyle screening and counseling, classes on eating and preparing healthy meals and, later this year, we're introducing Dave Ramsey's "Financial Peace at Work" that features an impactful 12-week financial planning program.

What's really in play at Daman is a pure focus on improvement – wherever that may lead.

As always, there is more to do.

Get on board. Fifty Association for Manufacturing Excellence (AME) convention attendees will have an opportunity November 1 to tour the Daman facility, as well as Crown Manufacturing in Elkhart, Ind. The group will take a bus from the Chicago convention site and learn en route and on-site the world-class philosophies of successful manufacturing that they can take back to their own companies.

Weinkauf named chairman of NFPA board.

Tom Weinkauf, distributor services team member and project engineer, has been named chairman of the Technical Board of the National Fluid Power Association. He has been chair of the hydraulic valve section for the past six years.

Forever learning. Any employee enrolled in university classes may receive up to 100 percent reimbursement (based on the student's grade in the class), thanks to Daman's long-time commitment to personal development. Many others take advantage of enrichment classes, including guitar, golf, photography, yoga and fitness, where reimbursement is 50/50.

In case their day jobs don't work out!

This year's company picnic was the biggest one so far, with 249 attendees. Impressive prizes, such as a 22" HDTV, a La-Z-Boy recliner, and a Nintendo® Wii™ with two controllers and five games were hot items. They paled, however, to having Daman's President and Vice President wash a lucky winner's car – right on the spot. But there's more! Larry and Dave also agreed to have the car detailed. Food, fun and games, and a little physical labor (for some) made for a great day.

Randy Tavernier almost couldn't make himself retire.

After 14 years at Daman, and with careful planning, 55-year-old Tavernier decided to retire. Only one thing stood in his way: company loyalty. He had a retirement date in mind, but the date came and went – again and again and again. Finally, he told his Cell Leader, "Today's the day." A pizza party, dessert, a plaque and lots of well wishes sent him on his way. He says he'll "hang out" and continue to collect cars. Thanks, Randy!

Spotlight on Krysten Shoulders



Before Krysten joined Daman in February 2005 as Human Resources Manager, she had no idea that her life experiences would be such a perfect match for her new job. Even before she and her husband became parents of three boys, ages 4, 8 and 12, she had set in motion a lifestyle that included goal-setting, leadership, mentoring, teaching and volunteering.

As a first-grader, she became a Girl Scout. That early commitment led to her lifetime membership in that organization. Early on, she vowed to earn every badge she could and, as a Senior Scout, earned the Leadership award and the Girl Scout Gold Award – its highest honor, comparable to the Boy Scout Eagle Award.

The culmination of her efforts involved a community service in her hometown of Sturgis, Mich. When the city instituted its 911 emergency system in 1992, Krysten led a group of Girl Scouts who designed, printed and distributed awareness stickers to grocery store shoppers.

As an active member of her church, as an employee whose work is closely linked to all other employees, and as a busy wife and mother, Krysten still remembers and practices the character-building tenets she learned as a child.

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“Homegrown” talent make smooth transition to WinWork team.

After experiencing a 200 percent increase in design jobs in the first four months of this year, the Distributor Services group needed help. As is usually the case, help was nearby.



DamanWINWORK NEWS

With more work coming its way, the WinWork team didn't have to look far to find the help it needed. Help came in the persons of Mark Nelson and Ken Groen, who were already Daman employees. “The jump in design jobs, plus the anticipation of a new machine and its added design possibilities, made us realize the importance of staying ahead of the game. We didn't want to be caught short,” said Matt Giloth, WinWork Manager.

Two seasoned Daman employees fill the bill.

Nelson came from manufacturing, with five years' knowledge of how Daman builds and does things. According to his co-workers, he has an outstanding quality record. Not just outstanding, but almost unheard-of. With a goal of just 2-3 chargeable errors on his \$1.5 million machine, he had no errors for eight months. “When the work reaches the machine operator, it's been touched by many hands. It's important to check the work of the previous 'hands' and then commit to your own job,” he said. That attention to detail serves him well in his new position. He joins five other designers, with a seventh to be added soon.

With a full résumé in customer service management and more than two years of service in Daman manufacturing, Groen has completed two cores of the Microsoft Certified Systems Administration program (MCSA). His knowledge of customer service and software adds a new dimension to WinWork, according to Giloth. “He's great on the phone and understands the philosophy of the rest of the distributor services team. That, plus his software expertise, adds more flexibility to our staff mix,” he added.

Nelson and Groen are excellent additions to the WinWork team. New tools and new talent from a tried and true source.

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