

Ritchie & Associates

The Performance Improvement Consultants, Since 1967

Implementing “Work Management” In A World Class Service Company

Client Profile:

Founded in 1981, this privately held company has the world's largest selection of old and new dinnerware, including china, stoneware, crystal, glassware, silver, stainless and collectibles. The 415,000 square foot facility houses an incredible inventory of over 13 million pieces in more than 300,000 patterns, some over 100 years old.

Each day customers replace broken or missing pieces or simply add to their collection. The operation processes up to 10,000 phone calls or online inquiries per day. New items are added each day and all are inspected, graded, inventoried and entered into their computerized inventory system. These systems, along with individual customer files that are maintained with records of specific requests, allow the staff to quickly locate the desired dinnerware pieces for thousands of customers. The company is renowned for its service levels and has earned state and national recognition awards for its family friendly atmosphere as one of the best places to work.

The Need & Approach:

With their business growing, the Founder & CEO and President engaged Ritchie & Associates to increase productivity while improving, or at least maintaining, their World Class Service Levels. After a two week Analysis, at no fee to the client, Ritchie developed a specific improvement initiative to achieve the productivity gains. With 16 different areas of operation, each with their own unique work activities and functions, we were charged to develop, design and implement a Work Management System customized for each area. The concepts of Planning, Execution, Follow-up and Reporting would be incorporated into each system, but each would possess their own uniqueness to accommodate the varying nature of the work. Some areas were transactional, others worked off of backlogs and others were based on incoming requests from the customers.

The Work & Results:

Each area's work activities and processes were studied in detail in close cooperation with the Hourly Workers, Lead Personnel and Supervisors. Through activity definition, process mapping and visual observation, duplication of effort, process variance and non-value added activities were identified and eliminated. Also, workflows were streamlined and method changes were implemented. As the preferred state of operating was clearly defined, work-to-time relationships were established for all direct and indirect functions.

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This data became the basis for the Work Management Systems for each area. The means for planning the workload, tracking volumes and labor hours, and reporting performance were developed. Management/Supervisor Training Sessions were conducted, as well as one on one coaching.

This provided the Supervisors with the ability to become familiar with their new role by utilizing the System and the tools to effectively manage their area of responsibility, and to drive the performance improvement. At the same time, the Service Levels were also measured to ensure performance was maintained or improved. Results included:

- A 15% increase in productivity, as defined by output per labor hour worked.
- Individual performance reporting was implemented in all areas as timely accurate and meaningful daily/weekly reporting was established.
- All customer service level goals were either maintained or improved.
- All employees clearly understood and bought into the performance objectives. They understood the need for Continuous Improvement.
- An effective system for resource allocation and deployment is now in place.
- The improvement generated a Return on Investment of 3.18:1.0

Another way we are supporting our growth is with the commitment to our Continuous Improvement Process. It is very exciting that the work Karen and Ritchie & Associates are doing will help us to improve our efficiency, while still providing World Class Service.

Founder & CEO