

Welding Management—Demystifying an Executives Traditional Viewpoint

by Jack R. Barckhoff, P.E.

Convincing top management to take action necessary to improve their welding operations can often be challenging. This is often surprising given that they have overall responsibility and are held accountable for their company's bottom line profits.

While executives are involved in other functional areas of the company, most have little or no interaction with their welding operations. Few take the time or make an effort to understand how welding can impact the company's bottom line. For example, while an executive would spend \$100,000 to purchase a machining center to improve the product cycle time by 5%, spending \$15,000 to upgrade a simple welding fixture or provide training to improve welding productivity is overlooked. This is unfortunate because the simple upgrade or training may have improved welding productivity 20%, a far more lucrative investment than the machining center.

Many times top management is reluctant to improve their welding operations because they view welding as an "art" that cannot be controlled. Once they learn that welding is in fact an "engineered science" they can come to realize the benefits that can come from implementing a "welding management system" that utilizes important measurements and controls.

Just as metal removal is used to control certain machining variables in machining operations, welded metals are added with precision by controlling the essential welding variables. These controls contribute to worthwhile savings for a company. When utilizing controls, along with a monitoring, auditing and reporting system to assist welders, supervisors and others through the transition of change, executives can understand how their support and involvement fosters these changes and produces profits.

As more executives are exposed to these possibilities and discover the value of a total welding management system, they will experience increased profits they never expected from their welding operations. Many will also find the added benefit of gaining world-wide competitiveness in the US welding industry.

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