

Quick Tips

Easy ideas to improve production efficiency

iPod® or iPain?

Those little white ear buds are quite the fashion statement, and they are seen everywhere today. In fact, employees have even convinced some factory owners MP3 players increase productivity by ending idle chat. If you were to assess productivity with and without MP3s, what do you think would happen? Employees would intentionally work slower without the players and faster with them just so they could keep them. But that's not the biggest problem.

The real danger lies below the surface. An iPod®, digital camera, flash or jump drive, and some cell phones have hard drives onto which an employee can drag and drop your mailing list, customer list, database, catalog, or pricing structure, then slip it into his or her pocket, and deliver it to your competitors. You would never know.

The more likely danger is negligent damage. Many employees use company computers to download music, exposing you to antipiracy laws as well as viruses, spyware, keyloggers, downloaders, hijackers, Trojans, spybots, and more. An employee can corrupt your entire network with one errant music download. These downloads work through file-sharing software that places files into a folder on the computer; with peer-to-peer networks, anyone who downloads file-sharing software can access that folder. What if the folder also contains your mailing list? Or what if the downloaded file contains a virus

that sends all of your data to another site? A disgruntled employee could even use an MP3 player, cell phone, or Flash drive to import a virus onto your network and bring your entire system to a halt.

Here are other issues to consider:

1. An employee may not hear malfunctioning equipment or an approaching forklift.
2. One employee can steal another's unit, causing internal strife.
3. An employee will answer a ringing cell phone, stifling productivity.

What should you do? Consider a policy that limits or disallows the use of any unauthorized electronic devices in the factory. Such devices should be stored in employee lockers not accessible within data secure areas. Computers should have security features that allow access to only certain data, USB ports, drives, and the Internet. Data should be encrypted, and your IT department should log which employees access data.

For more information, Google "iPods in the work place"; check local, state, and federal regulations about the use of such devices in a manufacturing environment; and ask your workers comp and liability insurance agents about their concerns. Then decide whether you want to suffer the ire of employees when you eliminate those little white earbuds.

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Reduce Frame Production Labor, Scrap, and Defects

To achieve the best possible quality from the saw, here are four areas on which to focus. Attention to these details will improve the quality of the completed frame. Production labor can be reduced as a cleaner cut will result:

1. The blades must be sharp at all times. Dull blades damage moulding.
2. The saw's down-stroke must be the appropriate speed for the material and blade type.
3. Chip breakers and scrap supports must be installed correctly (level to the table and parallel to the saw fence) and fresh enough to provide support of the moulding close to the edge of the blade. Phenolic, PVC, and wood scrap supports and chip breakers are wear items. They must be replaced regularly to be most effective.
4. Machines must be well-maintained, work with the air system (drain the water trap and replenish the lubricator), spindles, belts, and pulleys all in good condition. The machine should be aligned to factory specifications to produce minimal vibration.

If these four areas are maintained correctly, a reduction in touch-up labor, scrap, and defect will result.

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Contributors to this column are industry members who have experience in production framing operations. If you have a tip of your own, please send it to Quick Tips, PFM Production, PO Box 102, Morganville, NJ 07751.