

# Quick Tips

## Easy ideas to improve production efficiency

### Set the Table Straight

How cutting and joining tables are set up determines the quality of your corners. They need to be perfectly aligned to get perfect corners.

Most saws have built-in fences that moulding rests against for cutting, with blades set to cut at 45 degrees to the fence. But most saws also have infeed and measuring tables, and this is where many cutting problems occur. An infeed table surface needs to be perfectly in line with the cutting surface of the saw. Too high and you get openings on the face of your frames; too low and you get openings on the back.

If you use a freestanding table for infeeding, as you adjust one corner up, the opposite corner goes down. This can make alignment difficult. Tables that attach to a saw at one end with adjustable legs at the other are much easier to get in line.

Most measuring systems attach to a saw and measure to the right. Again, this must be perfectly in line with the cutting surface. There are two angles to check. First, make sure the entire measuring surface is in line with the cutting surface. Second, make sure the measuring fence is perfectly in line with the saw's built-in fence along its full length.

Joiner tables are just as critical. Too high and you get gaps on the backs of frames; too low and you can fight big frames to get the corners closed. When you get them right, frames will almost join themselves!

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### Hidden Blade Damage

We spend a lot of time trying to get the best possible saw cuts. Even with many improvements, we couldn't find out why some batches weren't cut at the proper angle. We had signed up for a semi-annual preventive maintenance service. We made sure all blades were used and sharpened in pairs. We trained staff to do regular saw cleaning and checkups, specifically noting the level of the phenolic block and measuring gauges. Everything seemed to be accounted for. Still, we had occasional stretches of bad cuts.

What we eventually found was that blades had been damaged when cutouts became caught in the hood covering the rotating blade. It is rare, but in a split second it can put a minute curve in a saw blade. We also found that damage can occur when blades are used on a saw with worn bearings or when they are dropped. These curves aren't detectable to the naked eye. Our solution was to use a source that has a "dial indicator" to show if a blade is warped or not.

If you have a problem with cuts, try another set to see if the problem stops. If so, and you can't find a source to repair a warped blade, your only real option is to discard it.

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### Employee Discussion Tracking Log

Our greatest asset is our people. They can also be our worst nightmare. Today, the laws are set up to protect employees more than employers. We also live in a world where lawsuits are commonplace; harassment and discrimination are common human resource concerns.

To help combat this, production managers should protect themselves by keeping a discussion tracking log of conversations and observations regarding their employees. These logs are managed on a daily basis and are somewhat informal. The only requirements are date, time, place, and people involved. A simple form should be made to help standardize these elements in the document header. Describe what happened and what was said. Just keep it short and concise.

Jotting down things seen or discussions with employees will help form a trail of events that may prove "handy" in court or, at the very least, help with annual performance reviews. These logs do not need to be signed by employees; they don't even need to know about them. The logs only reflect a consistent, regular history that may prove invaluable. How many times have you told an employee not to do something and couldn't remember how many times you actually addressed the issue over the course of a year?

Consistency is the key. Make sure the logs are submitted to your human resource department regularly so they can be made a part of each employee file. These logs can help make the difference in controlling the company's exposure to frivolous lawsuits.

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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, 207 Commercial Court, Morganville, NJ 07751.