

Quick Tips

Easy ideas to improve production efficiency

Speed Up Hardware Installation With Jigs

With larger jobs coming in, you need all the speed and accuracy you can get. One way to reach new levels of productivity is to put your tape measure away when you install security hardware or D-rings. Instead, use acrylic scraps and strips of foamboard to make clear jigs for proper, consistent placement of mounting hardware.

Start by measuring the first frame and marking the locations of the hardware. Then lay a piece of acrylic on the back of the frame and drill holes in it that line up with the marks. Attach foamboard with 1/2" ATG tape to the acrylic to create stops or bumpers that will keep the acrylic jig aligned correctly with the frame. Just make sure you sand the edges of the acrylic so it won't damage the frame. Using an acrylic jig, your workers can zip down the assembly line and lay it on each frame to mark all the hardware locations at the same time, providing more speed and precision.

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General Manager
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Keep Slow Credit Customers Buying

Everyone has customers who pay slowly. Most mean well but lack the cash flow. Conventional wisdom is to stop selling them until they're caught up. The problem is, they find a new supplier, making you wonder if payment will ever come while you lose income from an existing customer. Instead, invite them to continue doing business. Here's how:

- Have a phone or personal meeting to discuss their debt. Express your concerns but also let them know you value them and will stick with them as long as they commit to working with you.
- Clearly tell them you'd like to continue selling to them and that it would be a double disservice if they don't pay *and* they take their business elsewhere.
- Create an arrangement so they can give you prepayment or COD while making modest progress on the balance.
- Don't get further behind. If you stay even or make progress on the balance and get new orders, you'll be better off.

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Count Those Steps

Does your staff do a lot of walking during production? You may not think so, but even a few extra steps repeated many times throughout the day can cost you more than you know. Look at those walking steps like mileage on a taxi meter, with every step costing you money.

When you analyze your production processes, you can probably find many opportunities for improvement. Start by counting the steps that employees take during their production work. For example, we had a shipper who was processing 150 packages on busy days. The process had him walking about three steps from the scale to where the package was staged for shipment. An average stride is about three feet, so he was walking nine feet to and nine feet from the staging area or 18 feet total. Multiply that by 150 trips on a busy day, and the shipper walked over 2,700feet—more than a half a mile, half of it carrying packages. By moving a table and giving the shipper a staging cart directly behind him, a lot of unnecessary steps were eliminated. The shipper spent less time doing his job and got more done!

Apply this concept to your entire production process. Moving products on carts and pallets saves walking steps and handling. Not only can workers get more done in less time, but you usually get better production as well as fewer opportunities for damage. A redesign of a work area that results in fewer steps can add up to big savings.

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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.