Monitoring factory production from Las Vegas

While dividing his time between the factory, his retail outlet, visting interstate clients and travelling overseas, Mark Tozer finds his Empower time tracking software keeps him in touch with everything. By Sean O'Sullivan, B Com (Hons) Otago University Empower Software

Mark Tozer owns and manages Peppertree Furniture, a large progressive Adelaide based commercial furniture manufacturing business that markets his product throughout Australia.

"As owner of the Peppertree Furniture manufacturing business I saw the writing on the wall over 10 years ago, having to compete with increasing local competition and ever increasing volumes of imported goods from China coming onto our market," said Mark. "It was clear that I needed quickly to get my factory highly efficient, and I needed to maintain 100% factory productivity on a daily basis or I would not remain in business.

"The problem I had, and still have, is that I am not in the factory a significant amount of the time. I own and manage our furniture retail business at another site, I am interstate regularly seeing clients and I am overseas regularly sourcing components."

The solution was obvious – secondhand PCs for the factory floor and staff and job time tracking software.

"Empower time tracking software, purchased now over three years ago, has enabled me, with the same factory staff and same weekly hours worked, to increase our weekly production by just on 100%. That is, with the same staff I have doubled my production.

"As MD I am actively involved in viewing our factory productivity screens and reports on Empower every day. In doing so I support my production manager with discussion about what is going right and wrong and action we need to implement on a daily basis. When I am not in the factory, either at our retail store, on the road interstate or overseas, I diligently view the Empower screens and reports on my laptop and analyse our live factory production and productivity on a daily basis and phone or email my production manager to raise issues that I see.

"Our staff are paid a weekly bonus based on their individual output. Empower software accurately tracks and reports job, daily and weekly downtime and production. The bonus is paid to individual staff simply for meeting two criteria – not exceeding their total factory downtime each day and for not exceeding their budgeted times on manufacturing jobs by more than 10% on average.

"I was in Las Vegas for a week last year enjoying a well deserved beer at a bar and viewing my factory productivity and production live on my laptop. Two people at the bar saw the reports and asked me whether I was working. I explained that I had dialled into our computer system back at my factory in Australia and was just checking my daily factory production and productivity live. They could not believe it.

"When I am on the road during the day I usually stop off at a café for a coffee and quickly check my five main Empower screens and reports to know everything at the factory is as expected (or otherwise). I take the technology for granted now I suppose but it is an awesome tool and I certainly would not be without it.

"I have also invested in the next generation of Empower software, which accurately plans and schedules all current and future jobs and their respective start and finish times. This job scheduling is presented in the form of a daily and weekly calendar and Gantt chart. We are confident that this tool will help take us to the next level and again increase our factory productivity.

"Whatever form of manufacturing or engineering you are involved in, my advice is you definitely need PCs for your factory floor and Empower time tracking software. I invested just on $16,000 in Empower software over three years ago and it is now returning me in excess of $200,000 additional profit per year."●

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