

## Getting the Good Vibes at Austube Mills!

*"Early on we were embarking on this journey trying to fix everything, every minute and predominantly the maintenance guys got bombarded. If they saw me coming, they'd hide!"*

Day 2 of CTPM's Annual TPM & Lean Forum saw the likes of some very charismatic, insightful and engaging speakers. All experts and leaders in their respective fields, they came to share their own experiences in the search for Operations Excellence. Looking to inspire, educate and pass on his 'good vibe' was Craig Mayne.

Craig is currently in his 7<sup>th</sup> year at the Somerton Austube Mills Plant as Continuous Improvement Superintendent. A qualified fitter and turner with a Diploma of Management under his belt, Craig has over 30 years experience in the manufacturing industry. He spoke at the forum about his strong passion for practical frontline improvement.

Figure 1: Craig Mayne at the Forum



With 88 current full-time employees, Craig is adamant about keeping the site running at an optimal level as tough times in the manufacturing industry have seen the foreclosure, downsizing and the moving off-shore of some of Australia's largest manufacturers. Deciding that real and permanent change needed to be made, Craig adopted what he views as the key concept in achieving Operations Excellence, Frontline Problem Solving.

*"Why Frontline Problem Solving? Well it seemed to canvas a lot of the issues and problems that were testing us. It provided us a method to address our reactive problems, while the methodology supports us with our proactive improvement projects. It causes Frontline employees to be highly engaged in the process. It challenges our assumptions and uses our experience."*

Since partnering with CTPM in March 2012, they have seen a positive impact on Overall Equipment Effectiveness (OEE) and the highest level of engagement throughout the whole site as personnel in all crews now have knowledge and understanding of the structured 7-Step Frontline Problem Solving process.

*"We gave ourselves a purpose: To stop the build-up of problems by getting to the root cause and assuring the problem does not reoccur. This was the crux of it all."*

With the goal of improving their OEE, Craig and his team developed some Process Triggers put in place to determine when a Frontline Problem Solving process needed to be implemented. They asked their workforce:

- Did you have a problem today that caused a delay of 120 minutes or more?
- Did you have multiple stops for the same reason that caused a delay of 120 minutes or more?
- Did you drop product, which in turn effected the Yield entitlement for the rolling?

If the answer to these questions was a total and resounding "Yes", the team would be asked to spend 30 minutes identifying the issue, the cause and outline a containment strategy. "Good time invested, we say." exclaims Craig. The crews would then fill out their A3 Frontline Problem Solving Summary Sheet as shown in Figure 2 below, at the following morning's 9.30am Meeting. At the meeting the issue is raised and looked over by the Superintendents to decide whether a containment

had been implemented and the issue resolved satisfactorily or if it needs further investigation to address its **root cause**.

**Figure 2: Sample A3 Frontline Problem Solving Sheet**

Craig continued to talk about the importance of smart allocation of resources. The teams found that some of their smaller equipment issues were directly related to one of the larger, on-going issues the site was seeing at the time. The fixing of the larger problem would have a trickle-down effect and help to correct smaller issues down the line. “Sometimes you need that broader data in order to allocate what resources you’re going to employ and where best they would go.”

In a business competing with cheap overseas imports, Craig was proud to announce the vast financial benefits seen by Austube Mills with Mills 7 and 8 recording a combined bottom line **saving of over \$850k in the last financial year**.

Other positives established at the site from practicing TPM & Lean include the fact that currently 75% of their personnel are now trained in the structured 7-Step Frontline Problem Solving process, which is supporting and complimentary to the site’s *good vibe* and positive culture. The Somerton site has also been recognised with the Award for Quality as part of the Austube Mills Australia Core Value Awards 2014.

In summation of the Somerton sites Frontline Problem Solving Process, Craig outlined the 4 key factors of the daily process that was important:

- Clearly defined triggers;
- Review triggers daily at the sites Info Centre;
- Importance of prioritisation of resources; and
- Use of visual management systems such as charts, forms and boards to track progress.

*“Doing these things daily is important. As a manager or superintendent, you have to be there every day. I’m there on the shop floor every day. Remember, direct engagement all the time. Get out on the floor and people will tell you what’s going on. If you’re spending too much time in your office, you’re losing.”*

To further the importance of communication with your personnel, Craig illustrated his notion of *vibe* and how it is now generating waves of positivity across the site. Four simple concepts as detailed in the book *Fish*<sup>[1]</sup> can be employed to create the sense of positive vibes.

- 1. Choose Your Attitude:** Despite problems that may arise in and out of the workplace which are out of our control, we do have the ability to choose our own attitude. So make it a good one.
- 2. Play:** Employ a sense of play in the workplace. The Somerton site organises social events, such a lawn bowls and other fun activities and contests around the workplace to keep spirits and productivity high.
- 3. Make Their Day:** Recognising and rewarding team members when they have achieved goals or gone above and beyond their regular duties.
- 4. Be Present:** Have respect, listen and encourage one another. For leaders, “be present” can also mean being physically present on the shop floor. Communicate with your team and see what their concerns are.

Craig left the audience with one final note about the Somerton site. With a clear **process** and engaged **people**, the **product** of these two factors have resulted in a strong, active, profitable and overall productive workplace with workers and personnel enthusiastic about the journey towards Operations Excellence.

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#### References:

1. Lundin, S Paul, H & Christensen J 2008, *Fish!: A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results*, Hooder & Stoughton General Division, London