Up-skilled engineers increase tea production by up to 40% with Festo tailored training programmes

A leaner brew for Twinings

Although one of the nation's favourite brands, like many manufacturers, the recession and increased competition from overseas production has created the need to re-align business, off-shoring some production lines and streamlining others. The result was a leaner approach to manufacturing, installation of new technology, organisation restructure and the requirement to upskill some employees.

Twinings holds the title for the longest standing logo in use, a claim to fame that captures the longevity and fondness for the brand over the centuries. Thomas Twining first introduced tea into his coffee house in 1706, sure that it would grow in popularity and replace the more typical beverages of that time, coffee, ale or gin. It proved to be an astute move. Initially enjoyed by the rich and famous, by the 1750s it was favoured by all classes and had been firmly adopted into the British consciousness. Today, Twinings produces 100 varieties of tea enjoyed by tea lovers across the world.

The challenge

For the engineering team at Twinings, based in Andover, this posed a new challenge: how to minimise costs and increase productivity with a reduced headcount and organisational restructure. The most apparent solution was to reduce machinery downtime and reduce the cost of repairs and servicing. To do this required cross-skilling and up-skilling of the existing team. They needed to be able to carry out diagnostics and simple repairs to keep machinery up-and-running and reduce the costs associated with downtime.

Initially Twinings looked at off-the-shelf training packages, but quickly saw the benefits of a tailored programme which could be delivered on site. This approach would make training more relevant to the company's own skillset; allow the engineering team to share knowledge within the team; and provide hands on, practical experience that would help them in their day to day work. Twinings appointed Festo Training and Consulting to provide the on-site training as they had their roots firmly embedded within the engineering and manufacturing sector.

Skills Analysis

The first step in developing the course was to carry out a skills analysis session. Involving members of the engineering team, skills analysis enabled Twinings to establish strengths and weaknesses within the engineering department; identify common issues that arise and their root causes; identify specific areas of training that would benefit the team; and reduce the amount of machinery downtime to increase productivity.

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Wayne Sykes, Engineering Manager at Twinings comments, “It was important to involve the team in the initial training skills analysis, as it helped focus them on our overall business objectives and establish areas where additional skills would benefit. As a result, they became far more engaged in the training process and recognised it as a benefit to their own learning and development as well as the longer-term benefit to the organisation.”

Training took place over a two week period and involved 15 maintenance engineers and 6 electrical engineers. Course content aimed to provide improved overall knowledge of the machinery on-site and enhance technical skills. It included pneumatics training, sharing of skills, problem-solving, hands-on maintenance and basic lean principles.

The key to the training’s success has clearly been its relevance for Twinings engineers. Wayne Sykes comments, “Feedback from delegates showed that they liked Festo Training and Consulting’s approach to our team. They clearly understood manufacturing and listened when we discussed some of the issues that our team regularly face. They took into account the overall objectives of the organisation and worked with us to tailor a programme that was genuinely useful and could be used practically within our day-to-day work. One of our engineers said that it was the best and most useful training session he had ever been to.”

Training Reinforcement
Research shows that unless delegates have the opportunity to apply the knowledge acquired in training within two weeks, 50% of that acquired knowledge will be lost. It was therefore important to embed the principles and knowledge from the training as quickly as possible.

Less reliance on external servicing and repairs has meant that the engineering team has quickly implemented the knowledge acquired on the training course. The engineering support team meet weekly to discuss and review production and maintenance and the team also shares their learning via an in-house engineering forum, which aims to help share best practice throughout the organisation and across multiple sites.

A more robust performance management system provides the opportunity to focus on business objectives and identify further training needs, where required.

Results
Prior to training, 35% of all downtime was as a result of engineering breakdowns. This has been reduced to 12% and continues to reduce as the engineering team becomes more confident in putting their skills into practice. Overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) has increased and on one production line OEE has increased by 40%. The use of external suppliers has reduced and there has been a 15% reduction in parts, repair and maintenance costs. Diagnosis is far quicker and the engineering team is more able to implement quick fixes and modifications until a required part arrives. Staff morale has increased and retention levels have remained high. ■

For more information on Festo Training & Consulting skills analysis see: www.festo-diadactic.co.uk/skillsanalysis