



BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

By Petr Hora, CCI business partner, Europe



Petr Hora

A two-hour walk takes you from Frydlant, a little town in north Bohemia, into either Germany or Poland. Not only does Frydlant boast a rich architectural heritage in that it has one of the most spectacular medieval castles in Europe, but it also has an impressive industrial tradition. This tradition is currently represented by Frydlantské Strojírny (FS), or Frydlant Machinery Works and TRW Automotive.

Originally specialising in producing drying equipment for the textile industry, FS also was affected by a decline in the textile industry in Europe during the 1990s. But, the new owners viewed this as an opportunity to develop a positive business strategy.

Based on many decades of experience in developing and producing industrial drying equipment, the company now focuses its activity on supplying industrial dryers to growing industries such as those manufacturing construction insulation materials. FS secured large contracts with many new customers, especially from former Soviet Union countries, thanks to its manufacturing capabilities and aggressive marketing. This has earned the company a reputation as a reliable partner and leader in its field.

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In the spring of 2006, FS management decided that the positive sales trend could only be sustained if the company also focused on improving operational capabilities - especially quality and productivity. CCI's initial assessment in July 2006 confirmed the need to introduce the foundation best practices of 5S, Teamwork, Visual Performance Management and Focused Improvement.

Implementation commenced in September with senior management attending a Leading and Managing Change workshop. This was followed by training supervisors and workers from the two pilot areas of sheet metal cutting and machining in 5S and Teamwork.

Based on the assessment, 5S was given top priority as there was a clear need to convince and motivate the workforce with early and highly visible wins. Stabilising elements such as standards and audits followed the implementation in November of the first 5S step (Seiri – clear-up). Seiso, the cleaning part, started in January.

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As expected, there was a great deal of scepticism among both supervisors and the workforce about the feasibility and sustainability of 5S. Two months after implementation, it's difficult to find anyone in the company who doesn't believe that 5S works.

It's a well-known fact that in the early stages of implementing World Class Manufacturing best practices, a fundamental switch in the mindset of employees is crucial in determining its success or failure. The TRACC programme has been designed with this in mind. It teaches and trains not only the techniques, but also positively influences how people think about their work, customers, co-workers and the company for which they work.

At FS, the changes have been for the better. And as long as all employees realise that the most important role of implementing WCM best practices is being played by themselves and that continuous improvement is a never-ending story that will improve their working lives, there's no doubt that Frydlantské Strojírny will become a world leader in its field.



Basalt Line

