



AS GOOD AS IT GETS

The Czech-based Plzensky Prazdroj brewery, meaning 'original source of Pilsner', began in 1842 as a collective facility operated by several independent brewers from Plzen, a town about 90km west of Prague, the Czech capital.



- *Keg line efficiency at the main plant up from 83% to 96%*
- *Export bottling efficiency up from 74% to 88%*
- *Bottle breakage reduced from 0.99% to 0.70%*
- *Projected financial benefits of more than 6 million Czech Krowns per annum at one brewery*



Historical gate at the main plant

Today it is owned by SABMiller plc, produces some 10.2 million hectolitres of beer annually, and enjoys approximately 50% market share in the Czech Republic. The group's flagship brand for its international portfolio is its legendary bottom-fermented Pilsner Urquell, the world's most imitated original. Through its brands Pilsner Urquell, Gambrinus, Radegast and Velkopopovicky Kozel, Plzensky Prazdroj sells more beer on the Czech market than any other company. While maintaining the quality and character that made the brewery such a success, the plant has taken many steps toward modernisation. The group also has two other breweries in its stable, Velke Popovice near Prague and Radegast close to the Polish and Slovakian borders.

Early challenges

Although certainly on the right track in terms of vision, an initial Best Practices Assessment by a three-man CCI team in 2003 indicated that some of Plzensky's older manufacturing practices were hampering it in its quest to become the top brewery in Europe.

Also, although the company's commitment to maintaining traditional methods as much as possible was admirable, it resulted in many employees showing an initial resistance to the introduction of a WCM programme.

To counter this resistance, a Steering Committee chaired by the company president issued a brochure to each employee, outlining the purpose and scope of the WCM programme and how it would affect them in the workplace. Site visits were also made to CCI's other successful WCM implementation sites in nearby Poland.

Three pilot areas were identified for the WCM introduction because of their prominence in the brewery process, their importance to the final product and also the improvement opportunities. The areas were the filtration and bright beer tanks, export bottling line and the keg line.

In 2005 the WCM programme commenced by establishing a task force and teams in each of the selected areas. Each team identified key performance indicators and within a short period, rapid progress was made in the TRACC foundation best practices of Team Work, Visual Performance Measurement (VPM), 5S and Focused Improvement.

Benefits

Such was the progress that implementation of Pillar best practices was strongly encouraged soon afterwards. Several improvement programmes were

conducted and significant benefits materialised not only in quality and safety, but also financially. In late 2005 WCM implementation of foundation best practices were rolled out to all other operation departments.

During the same period, initial assessments were conducted in the other two breweries. WCM implementation started early last year. The bottling line was the pilot site at Velke Popovice and the keg line and brewing house were pilot sites at Radegast.

The subsequent scorecard revealed that keg line efficiency at the main plant was up from 83% to 96%, export bottling efficiency from 74% to 88% and bottle breakage reduced from 0.99% to 0.70%. Similar KPI improvements were achieved at the other two breweries with projected financial benefits of more than 6 million Czech Krowns per annum at Radegast.

When Plzensky Prazdroj commissioned a new state-of-the-art packaging hall in Plzen this year, the export line was decommissioned. Many team members from the original pilot lines were transferred to the new facility, which soon resulted in the rapid deployment of best practices.

The final proof of Plzensky's commitment to WCM methods and systems is the fact that it's now being used to combine the initiatives of the environmental health and safety and ISO 9000 programmes into a single integrated management system across all group breweries.

