



IN-HOUSE TRAINING HELPS PENTAGON PUNCH ABOVE ITS WEIGHT



Business Situation

Pentagon Chemical Specialties Limited of Workington, Cumbria was created in 2002 as the result of a management buyout (MBO) from Dow Chemicals and by 2007 turnover had increased from £15.4m to £24m. In 2003 the company bought the GLCC site at Halebank, Widnes to form Pentagon Fine Chemicals Limited which now has a similar turnover to Workington. Pentagon Chemical Specialties Limited manufactures specialty chemicals for the paper, fuel and oil industries. Just over half of the 80 employees at the Workington site are directly involved with manufacture and quality control.

Ronnie Fisher, Workington Site Manager, believes Pentagon's strong investment in in-house training has been vital to the company's success. He explains, "As an independent SME, we've developed a training scheme which must be the envy of many companies in any sector. Since the MBO we've improved all facets of operations, including Health and Safety, Environment, Occupational Health Surveillance, customer service,

supply chain and Overall Equipment Effectiveness (OEE)." Ronnie continues, "Although these initiatives were initially management-led, we've put a great deal of effort into informing and engaging employees throughout the business and this has really paid dividends."

Skills Development

In 2003 Pentagon embarked on a wide-ranging business improvement process, starting with a benchmarking exercise to understand how its current performance compared with world-class standards. Using the resulting gap analysis, the management team developed and implemented an action plan to improve batch times and quality, standardise cleanout procedures, eliminate mechanical breakdowns, reduce changes to the production plan and improve raw material supply times.

A training assessor was appointed in January 2005 and a new electronic competence management system was developed to improve record keeping and retrieval. Since then, extensive in-house training has been



“Despite our limited size and resources, we’ve really embraced the need for employee training to manufacture chemicals in a safe, efficient and environmentally friendly way.”

Ronnie Fisher, Site Manager

put in place using Pentagon’s own training and assessment programmes, including NVQs for process operators and NVQs in Business Improvement Techniques (BIT) for shift managers and operators. In addition, three senior managers have completed the High Value Managers Programme with Manchester Business School.

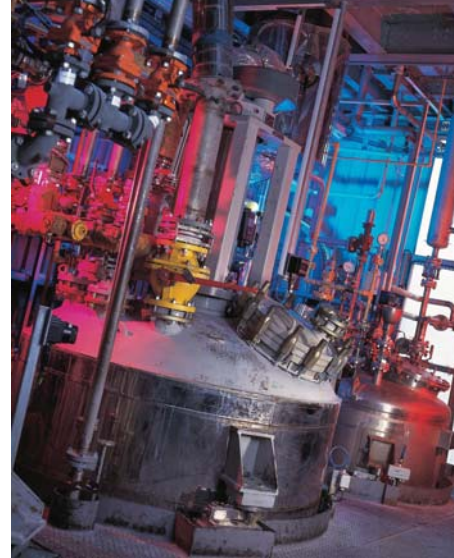
Following a review of the Permit to Work procedure, Pre-Job Risk assessments were introduced for members of the engineering department, supported by risk assessment training to BSC (British Safety Council) Level 2. These have been extended to all non-standard operations carried out by operators.

Communication of the safety message was improved by the appointment of safety

representatives on each shift who have undergone a 4-day IOSH (Institution of Occupational Safety and Health) approved course. Emergency exercise scenarios were identified from the Major Accident Risk Assessment (MARA) and to date a total of six scenarios have been run by the Training Assessor, Compliance and Health & Safety managers with each shift team.

Benefits and Outcomes

Since 2004, OEE has improved by almost 12%, while performance has increased by over 7%. As an example of the level of improvement, breakdowns, which used to account for 80% of engineering time, now account for less than 5%. The company has achieved over 1,000,000 hours without a lost time accident and it is 19 months since the



last external environmental complaint. The company is also on course to achieve its target for reducing Losses of Primary Containment (LOPCs).

All operators have completed the CIA’s NVQ level 2 Process Operator accreditation and are undergoing EAL BIT N/SVQ Level 2. Supervisors have successfully taken Level 3 NVQs and the NVQ programme has been extended to quality control, laboratory, supply chain and engineering staff. All staff are now working towards 10 training days each year.

“At the start of the exercises people wanted to take a step back but they are now volunteering ideas and prompting each other and the team leaders.”

Ronnie Fisher, Site Manager

The shift teams now have key roles and responsibilities for dealing with emergencies, working with team leaders in dealing with the incident, record keeping, information gathering and communications. Ronnie has noticed a distinct change as a result of the emergency exercises, “Shifts have grown in confidence and ability both individually and as teams. Training should be about giving the trainee the confidence to make the correct decisions when necessary.”

Learn more

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