Roberts PolyPro Employees Upgrade Skills

Roberts PolyPro
www.robertspolypro.com

Retraining at:

Central Piedmont Community College

Courses Taken:

- Motor Controls I
- Motor Controls II
- PLCs

Roberts Polypro, a division of ProMach, in Charlotte, NC was searching for Lean Manufacturing training and contacted their local community college, Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) to find out how they might be able to assist them with their needs.

CPCC staff visited with Roberts PolyPro representatives, discussed their training needs, and then toured their manufacturing facility. Additional information was forwarded to the company after the visit and later resulted in Roberts PolyPro's decision to work with CPCC to upgrade the skills of their some of their maintenance and equipment installer personnel.

Roberts PolyPro employs over 50 employees at their Charlotte facility. They design and manufacture innovative plastic fixtures to enhance the function of consumer packaging. These fixtures make packaging more user-friendly by allowing clients and consumers to carry a package, pour a product, re-seal a package, mount a product in a package, or enhance the retail display of a product. They also supply a variety of innovative finishing equipment to paperboard converters.

Seven employees were enrolled in one or more courses at CPCC, depending on the individual needs of the participant. These employees were selected because of the need to align their skill levels to the desired skill sets for their maintenance and installer positions. The employees participated in the training during their scheduled work time.

Equipment builders/installers are responsible for building and installing equipment that is sold to their customers. It is becoming increasingly critical for these employees to be cross-trained in all areas of electrical, electronic, and mechanical systems. For instance, in the past, Roberts PolyPro would have to send two builder/installers to a customer's site to install a new piece of equipment because most of the employees either had mechanical or electrical skills – not both. Their customers, like most manufacturers, are looking for any way possible to cut their expenses. They don't want to have to pay for two people to come install their new equipment. It is more beneficial for the customer to have one installer who can handle both the electrical and mechanical aspects of the job.

Maintenance employees are responsible for maintaining the equipment used in-house to produce various products with machining equipment such as: extruders, injection molding machinery, vacuum and air compressor systems, feed systems, horizontal and vertical punch presses, paper handling machines, etc. Typically, many of their mechanical maintenance personnel do not have a great deal of knowledge in electrical systems. Roy Tetrault, operations manager at Roberts PolyPro, indicated that some of the training participants have already been able to do some electrical wiring in situations where they previously would have called an electrical maintenance employee for assistance.

When asked if his company ever experienced difficulty finding employees with the skill sets they are looking for, he said, "It is very difficult to find someone that has the skill sets for both electrical and mechanical systems. Usually it is one or the other, or maybe you might find an electrician who has some mechanical skills, but most mechanics usually don't have electrical skills." This is precisely why training programs such as the Advanced Manufacturing/Integrated Systems Technology program at CPCC is critical to lessening skill deficiencies.

"The participants all enjoyed the training. They thought it was challenging at times, but that they got a lot of useful information from it," said Tetrault. "Right from the start, it was apparent that the opportunity for training boosted these employees' morale."

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