BUSINESS EFFICIENCY: A Result of Planning

Performing at your best requires hard work—but the results are worth it

“My day would be an easier one and I could get more accomplished if I were more efficient.”

It’s a comment that has occurred to many contractors.

Performing at your top efficiency level where you must control not only your own activities but that of others can never be accidental. It requires consistent and careful planning.

Many wall and ceiling contractors achieve this in full measure because they consciously exercise constant planning toward greater efficiency. And the regimen they follow can be put into use by nearly any contractor, large or small.

The first step is a full awareness that you must do this planning yourself and make it part of the day-in and day-out procedure of your business life.

The journeymen have their foremen or supervisors, and the superintendents and office personnel have you or someone whom you’ve assigned. But the buck really does stop with you. As the man who owns or runs the business you alone must perform your own planning and guidance.

A Hard Look

For a starter, stand back and look at what you are doing and how you are doing it. Take a hard, objective look, remembering that bad working habits become routinized as easily as good ones.

Imagine the procedure being performed by some other contractor or business colleague that you know. Examine your procedures minutely as you think they would view them.

Try to have at least a 30-minute period set aside each week during which you give sole consideration to an analysis in depth of one or more procedures in your business.

The act of setting this time aside for exclusive attention to specific problem areas helps assure that efficiency study becomes a business matter rather than a change occurrence. And it can often head off serious problems that are developing from lack of attention.

Avoid letting the costs involved in any step you plan to take assume unwarranted influence over every-thing else. It is wise to keep costs in mind, naturally, but remember that the best way of doing something is not automatically the least expensive.

A more costly alternative now may actually be the least expensive in the long run. The life-cycle cost concept can be a profit producer.

Whenever you are stumped temporarily for an answer put the problem aside for the time being or look elsewhere for help. Every minute you devote to worrying about something reduces the efficiency you can apply to your other business activities.

‘Nag’ Problems

And allowing a problem that evades immediate solution to “nag” at you can often close the door to finding the quickest and best answer. If possible, let your experience and know-how dwell quietly on the problem-then come back to it.

Insist on efficiency and care in the work your staff performs, espe-

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Efficiency

Specialy with the routine matters. These are the areas for most mistakes. And whatever inefficiencies may be present in their working habits will ultimately reduce your own effectiveness.

Many contractors who are most conscious of maintaining their own efficiency at a high level sometimes inadvertently allow lower standards to be practiced by their employees.

Avoid the temptation to shrug off the occasional mistake you or someone else makes as an occupational hazard of the business. Every error is evidence of a breakdown somewhere and can possibly lead to a more serious situation.

Treat errors as warning signals, as probable symptoms and find out “why.” Take immediate corrective action where appropriate.

Any changes or new procedures that you develop must be carefully communicated to those employees, customers or anyone else involved in that particular procedure.

Where this is not done with care there too often arises additional problems that reduce the overall efficiency of your business and returns you to a re-thinking session.

No matter how experienced you may be, that first idea that comes along is not necessarily the best or most efficient with which to handle a problem.

Look for ‘Snags’

So, mull your new solution over, criticize it, have others criticize it if you like, and look for “snags” before putting it into use. Once a new procedure is implemented it gathers momentum and becomes increasingly difficult to alter.

Often, a more improved version can result from a little more study or analysis. And, where it is possible, put numbers on things. A 15 minute savings is a better identity for a planned result than calling it a “slight savings in time.”

While other factors may appear more attractive, the efficiency of any procedure, new or old, should be judged primarily on the basis of results.

Continue to ask yourself if you are completely satisfied with the way a given procedure in your business is being handled. In those cases when and where you are not satisfied trust your business intuition and look into the matter.