

## Improving Productivity: Rethinking the Obvious Can Save Thousands

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In many industries assembly lines are employed to maximize the productive work (PW). The composites industry in general does not lend itself well to assembly line techniques. It is more of a “job shop” situation. That is, many jobs (gel coating, laminating, etc.) are conducted in series and parallel and coordinated to result in the finished product.

Further complicating analysis of productivity is the fact that each job contains elements of both PW and non-productive work (NPW). That is, when a laminator is laminating that would be considered PW. But when that laminator is waiting for another crew member (to spray or move out of the way) that is NPW. Add to that the NPW associated with moving from job to job, cleaning tools, handling scrap, repairing parts, etc., and there is a disproportionate amount of NPW involved in the typical composites operation. How disproportionate? The time spent on NPW in our industry is double the national average!

### Taking Steps to Increase Productivity

The key to improving productivity is realizing just how poor the utilization rate typically is and that it most likely represents an untapped source for improvement. The following are some specific examples of steps that can be taken to decrease NPW:

- Concentrate on avoiding messes as opposed to emphasizing clean up
- Broaden jobs / Flatten the organization / Cross train
- Simplify processes / Outsource
- Reduce crew sizes / Rethink overtime / Don't be a slave to clock time
- Solicit ideas from workers for reducing walking, cleaning, repairing, etc.
- Evaluate processes and materials as to utilization

### Hatch Covers: A Real World Example

The final suggestion in the list above is particularly important. Many times a seemingly efficient process increases NPW to such an extent that the net result is an increase in labor hours. An example of this involving Arjay products has to do with compression molding of small parts such as hatch covers. On the surface this would seem to be a very efficient process - no separate skin step, just load and press. But customer experience has shown that this one step method is fraught with NPW. Many have returned to skinning the mold halves and pressing (commonly used hand clamps are sufficient) with Arjay's lightweight J-Core material.

Space here does not allow detailed discussion of the benefits of this change. Give us a call to learn more. It might just be your first step in a program to improve your productivity.

