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CASTOOL TOOLING SYSTEMS – PRODUCTIVITY GAINS:

“You need to do everything”

Paul Robbins suggests that Castool Tooling Systems was a victim of its own success. Paul took over the position of General Manager 5 years ago. The company's annual productivity gains of five per cent had been good enough, particularly when the Canadian dollar was worth far less than its U.S. counterpart. Steel was also relatively affordable.

“It was being ‘pretty good’ that was preventing them from making huge leaps in productivity,” says the general manager of the Uxbridge firm, which serves the companies that use extrusion or die-cast

techniques to make aluminium parts.

But Castool has found ways to improve. In the past two years, profit has jumped by double digits as the business has addressed production processes, purchasing strategies, incentive bonuses, product enhancement, selling techniques and new markets.

Nothing demonstrates the changing culture better than the changes in personnel over the past four years. Out of a workforce of 90 employees, over 25% of the people have been replaced.

“Very often, the people who didn't fit with the culture [that] we were trying to provide

were barriers to the company's growth,” Robbins explains. “It's a very different workforce today. The core people are exceptional and supportive. I came up with a management philosophy: I would support people 100 per cent or let them find alternative employment.”

Even the use of raw material has been addressed.

After cutting steel into individual parts, Castool had traditionally sold off the scrapped chips for about 10 cents per pound. When the price of hot work tool steel jumped from \$1.20 to a lofty \$3 per pound,

however, internal teams placed a greater emphasis on cutting strategies. Instead of simply putting out sales orders to the plant for each product to be manufactured, sales orders were checked prior to manufacture to see if multiple products could be cut from 1 bar of steel. In most cases it worked and Castool reclaimed nearly half of the wasted material.

“If you do one of these things, you won't even get close to being good enough,” he says, referring to the wide-ranging business strategies that the entire industrial sector should adopt. “You need to do everything.”

