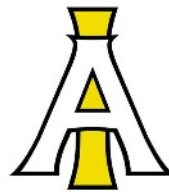


Case Study: Manufacturing



l'Ansons
Quality Feeds

Background

Founded in 1900, l'Anson Bros Ltd is an independent family run business, manufacturing more than 150,000 tonnes a year of quality feed for farm and equine animals and ingredients for use in the pet food industry. The business comprises three main production areas, Compounds, Coarse Ration and Micronizing. Compounds and Coarse Ration follow very much a seasonal pattern, much busier through the winter months of December to April, whilst Micronizing production is consistent throughout the year. The working week was traditionally Monday 6am – Saturday 6am, consisting of ten twelve hour shifts on a two shift system meaning all employees were working 5 x 12 hour shifts in a normal working week, 40 hours basic, 20 hours overtime, a week of days followed by a week of nights.

Reason for change

As year by year the business grew, it became clear that the traditional working pattern of Monday to Friday could no longer support the demand at peak times. The Compound plant in particular required weekend shifts to be added which meant the staff in this area, who had already worked 60 hours, were then sometimes working 72.

During the winter of 2007/2008 this area had to switch to 24/7 production for the busiest months of the year. A temporary pattern was put in place for this period, bringing in extra employees from other areas of the mill to assist, but it was clear we could no longer go forward with the traditional shift patterns which had been in place, needing something which could cope both with the very busy periods and alternatively the quieter summer months.

Process of change

We engaged with Working Time Solutions in the summer of 2008, with July 2009 as our target for change. Our original aim was to bring the employees average hours down from 60+ to around the 48-50 mark. A meeting with all the staff involved was held early in the process, after which a working group formed to represent the workforce at future meetings.

WTS encouraged us to breakdown the business into each small section and look thoroughly at the demand on that section on an hourly, daily, weekly and annual basis, to properly consider the man hours required at the different times during these periods.

As previously mentioned, all the staff worked the same 12 hour shifts, regardless of what area of the mill they worked in and the demand in their area. Having looked at each area in detail we were able to split them into five different groups, all requiring slightly different patterns.



Two of the five were straight forward cuts from 12 hour shifts to ten hour shifts with staggered starts to ensure the full 12 hour period was covered. The other three areas were slightly more difficult, two of them involved one main operator running a piece of plant which had to run for the full twelve hours of the shift. Cutting these employees to ten hour shifts would have left lots of two hour gaps which would be problematic to fill and need constant managing so it was decided the 12 hour shifts had to stay. One group were straight forward, on a two week pattern working a four shift week one week and a four and a half shift week the following week, with a colleague on each shift filling in the time away. The second group were probably the most complicated as demand in their area varies so much across the year, we needed a pattern which would allow us to function 24/7 for the winter months, but drop right down in the summer months. What was previously a two team role (one on nights, one on days) became a three team role, still allowing for there to be one on each shift, but also giving one time away.

The final group were five 'customer facing' staff, working permanent days. It was also key to their roles that they were on site for the full twelve hour shift so with WTS help we came up with a pattern which involved introducing one extra member of staff to the group. Six staff for five roles meant that each person could still work their 60 hour week for five weeks in a row, then have the 6th week off, with the extra person filling in their gap, giving them 300 hours in 6 weeks, an average of 50.

It had always been believed an amount of extra staff would have to be recruited to cover the drop in man hours, but by ensuring each area was covered to its requirements we found we had extra resources which could be utilised elsewhere and in fact only one extra member of staff was required to allow production to function as it had previous to the changes.