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In-Plant WTCA QC Users Tell All by Libby Walters with Dave Motter, Steve Stroder & Dan Archer

Three In-Plant WTCA QC users discuss the many benefits of the program.

You've heard what WTCA staff has to say about In-Plant WTCA QC, and now it's time to hear from two newcomers to the certified quality control scene: Tri-County Truss (Burlington, WA) achieved their certification in March 2004 and Carter-Lee Building Components (Mooreville, IN) was certified in February 2004. Joining the ranks of 30 WTCA QC certified component manufacturer locations nationwide, Tri-County's design manager Dave Motter and Carter-Lee's general manager Steve Stroder and QC manager Dan Archer dished with SBC staff on what the program has brought to their manufacturing operations.

SBC: How does In-Plant WTCA QC give you confidence in the jobs leaving your facility?

DM: We don't inspect enough trusses to know that every truss going out is absolutely correct, but it does hold our crews to a higher standard and in that sense I have a greater confidence in our product.

A great example of this confidence is that we are currently building a job with some long span 60-foot trusses, and as staff engineer, I used to go out into the plant and inspect them as they were built. Now with QC, I don't have to do that anymore.

SS/DA: In-Plant WTCA QC gives Carter-Lee Building Components a high level of confidence in the jobs leaving our facility correctly. By using the best QC program we have been able to find in the industry, we now document that we have been able to achieve a higher level of quality for our customers.

SBC: How successful is the marketing of your In-Plant WTCA QC certification to customers?

DM: I have to be honest that we haven't done a very thorough job in marketing our certification. We do use it in our paid print ads, but I wouldn't say there have been any tangible leads from marketing our certification.

SS/DA: We have had some success with marketing the QC program to our customers. I have noticed an increased interest in the use of recognized quality control programs by our customers. I do believe we could do better in this area though. I would like to see more attention and tools in this area.

SBC: In what ways does the In-Plant WTCA QC program help to reduce your exposure to risk?

DM: We feel that using the program reduces our risk considerably by having better product quality. We are less concerned about being named in a lawsuit for something like incorrect plate placement.

SS/DA: The In-Plant WTCA QC program helps Carter-Lee Building Components reduce exposure to risk by reducing errors and ensuring a structurally sound product for our customers.

SBC: Have you noticed reduced customer complaints and callbacks due to the use of the In-Plant WTCA QC program?

DM: Yes, we definitely have, although we don't specifically quantify it. We do record them and use them for training purposes. This time last year (before beginning the certification process) we had a few recurring quality issues. For example, one issue that we were constantly receiving calls about was camber. Now since we've been certified since January, I can't remember the last time we had a customer call of that nature.

SS/DA: We have been able to reduce the number of field repairs and customer complaints since using the In-Plant WTCA QC.

SBC: Can you put a price tag on using the program, what is your return on investment? For example, how many crews do you run and how much time is spent each week inspecting?

DM: We know what it costs us in terms of the actual program and the cost to employ two inspectors each day (we're running shifts around the clock). When you add increased customer satisfaction and employee pride to the equation, we feel that the positive returns far outweigh the overall cost.

SS/DA: We run six crews per day, and on an average, inspections generally take one and a half hours per day, which covers both first and second shifts.

SBC: Do you use the data from In-Plant WTCA QC as a management tool? Please describe how you use the data.

DM: Yes, we do. I review the inspections every day. I look for trends, problems and measures taken to correct errors. Then at the end of each month, I look at all the data for long term trends and analyze. In nine months, our error rate has really improved and we attribute that to the increased awareness of the crews.

It has turned out to be a great management tool for us in terms of evaluating the skills of individual crews. For instance, I can tell from the data if there is one crew that needs more training in a specific area or if it's a specific lead that needs some work.

SS/DA: Carter-Lee Building Components has used the data from the In-Plant WTCA QC program as

a management program, to reward our employees for excellent quality and reduced errors, along with a board-footage program requiring crews to hit a target production rate while maintaining quality.

SBC: Have you noticed increased teamwork or pride of crews due to overall improved quality of your product?

DM: Yes, definitely. They have collectively and individually taken more responsibility for their job. Before we began using the program, it used to be that a problem would be pointed out and the crew would grumble. Now that they have higher standards to meet, they want to fix those mistakes. It has improved their attitude as well as the overall quality of our trusses.

SS/DA: The crew members have demonstrated increased attention to detail and accountability for all team members' products. Employees take initiative to train new staff to meet the standards of the In-Plant WTCA QC program. This has been a great tool for us to promote quality as well as morale in our workforce.

SBC: Does everyone at the company—from management to production staff—believe that quality is essential to a great product? Please describe how.

DM: Yes. Historically, when the production staff was pushed to do more or work harder, the end result became more production and less quality. When we started holding them to the new higher standard of the QC program, they shifted their focus to quality first. It was not an easy transition for us and there were times when we wondered if everyone would agree that this would bring about a positive change in our quality. Now they don't just talk quality, they walk it too.

SS/DA: Quality and service has always been the most important aspects of our business. This starts with President Dave Carter and continues with the management team and our production staff.

SBC: Do you believe that true quality extends beyond manufacturing into areas like component design, sales and management?

DM: Absolutely. To us, quality means meeting building specifications and meeting customers' expectations.

SS/DA: Quality doesn't stop with production. The Sales Staff, Design Team, and Management Team are all highly motivated to achieve high quality and service for Carter-Lee customers.

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