

Christmas, New Year & All the Best!



Cheers - To Whatever You May be Celebrating!



“The confidence level of management is reflected in the success of an organization.”

Confident Management

Visiting a new molder is always interesting. There are always new ideas and new ways of doing things and you can be pleasantly surprised in even the smallest or most remote location to find a new twist on an old theme. There are also old ways that die hard and seem to be repeated forever at even the most experienced molder.

In assessing an unfamiliar operation with all the variables of rotomolding (142, if you recall), there are the obvious items: machine operation and layout, age of equipment and maintenance, cycle times and process control, mold condition and care, operator training and attention to detail, production flow and bottlenecks, scrap and performance data, etc.

However, what is not so easily quantifiable but can be readily seen or felt is the confidence of an operation.

Confidence in capability, confidence in understanding, confidence in execution, confidence in management – all dictate how the people of an organization respond to customer demands. In my experience, the confidence level of management is reflected in the success of an organization, not just in revenue terms but in every aspect of a company from cleanliness to innovation to whether or not it is a good place to work.

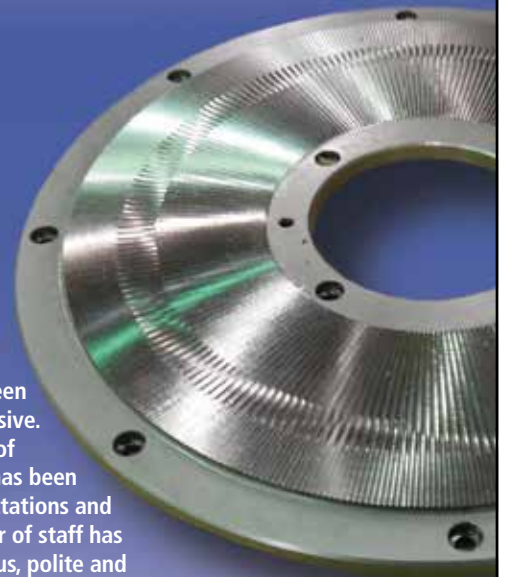
The best companies have management who are confident enough to trust their people. They give them responsibility and then give them authority. They let go. They maintain a steady approach in the face of triumph or disaster so that their people know they can approach them without fear.

The worst companies have management who are small minded and restrict their

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people. They often exude more fear than confidence. They hold on. Their demeanor changes with the weather and their people have to check the forecast before approaching them.

It doesn't take long to assess the level of confidence in an organization. One of the simplest observations is how well management passes on their knowledge. I have visited many companies where the owners or senior management attend every conference and have access to all the latest technology in the industry but who fail miserably at passing this down their organization. I work with others who involve as many of their staff as possible in new ideas and new approaches. Some of this is ability, some of this is style, but a lot of it is protective. To some it is logical to hold on to all the knowledge as this protects them and their business. To the best, providing access to knowledge for everyone is the most valuable way to support and develop their business. Good managers understand that they don't have to be the smartest person in the room on every subject.

Other signs are unmistakable too. How quickly do employees start to comment about management and lack of support? If more than a few complain to a newcomer within minutes about the way their company works, you may have a problem. Working at a rotomolding machine can be hard work and people can wear out quickly but if turnover is exceptionally high, there may be problems beyond heat and physical labor.

So look for confidence in your organization and work to encourage it. Management that is confident enough to allow for mistakes and confident enough to allow people to develop will create an environment that not only retains better people but one that presents better to customers. Be confident enough to allow for dissent (presented in a positive way) and new ideas beyond your own sphere of knowledge. Encourage people to question what they are doing and being asked to do. At the most basic level, look around your factory: is it bright, clean and inviting to work in? Are the people upbeat and enthusiastic about anything? How confident are they in what they are doing? I know this sounds idealistic and hard to define but the fact is that a plant can be 'read' in a matter of minutes after speaking to just a handful of people. The attitude and confidence of the people is a reflection of management and sets the baseline for everything – the details of performance naturally follow.

At the end of the day, you can be confident that people will care about your business if you show that you are confident enough to care about them.

Another year older and another year of great memories. 2014 was certainly an interesting year of milestones: 50th birthday, 25th anniversary, a new business model and the first signs of grey hair. I hope yours was as eventful – all the best to everyone for 2015! 