



Corning Environmental Technologies

Critical Thinking is a Powerful Key to a New Plant's Success

SCORECARD

- Increased market share
- Annual yields increased 13%
- Employee attrition is 75% below the Shanghai average
- Process thinking is part of the "life blood" of the organization

CLIENT: The Corning Environmental Technologies plant in Shanghai is a manufacturing hub that makes catalytic converter substrates for automotive OEMs throughout Asia. The plant is one of the highest yielding, highest quality factories in the Corning network and has achieved a record of consistent improvement against key success factors.

CHALLENGE: When the plant was first built, some customers were skeptical of its capabilities. The engineering and managerial work force, while well-grounded in theoretical education, hard work, and a tremendous willingness to learn, came from a top-down oriented society that was reluctant to express ideas or suggestions. A primary challenge for Corning management was to convince this excellent workforce that it was their job to have opinions.

SOLUTION: Kepner-Tregoe (KT) helped with planning, facilitated issues, and provided Problem Solving and Decision Making training. In addition, a program was launched to integrate process thinking into the way business was conducted every day. KT processes were incorporated into standard procedures and are used to resolve both production and commercial issues.

RESULTS: Results have been both subtle and dramatic. Expressing opinions is now viewed as acceptable, even when the boss is in the room. Working on cross-functional teams is no longer a foreign concept. Potential Problem Analysis has helped the new facility install equipment seamlessly. Situation Appraisal helps work stay on course while minimizing conflict and interdepartmental problems. Examples of successful use of process, use of process by senior staff, coaching, and rewards have helped to embed critical thinking skills and encourage their usage. Defect rates at a key customer are 20 times lower than before the factory supplied their parts. Based on their benchmarking, Corning Shanghai rates better than or competitive with all of its competitors and has broken records for ratings against key measures.