



Networking Meeting in Tasmania Demonstrates the benefits of Equipment Competent Operators

A successful networking meeting was held on Wednesday 22nd February focusing on the benefits of developing equipment competent operators. Hosted by the Simplot Australia's Devonport Packing Room, with representatives from Zinifex Rosebery Mine, ACL Bearing Company, Comalco, and Bonlac Spreyton attended.



Glen Avery, Packing Room Manager, first gave an overview of the Devonport Packing Room, currently undertaking Cycle 4 of their TPM³ journey. The Devonport packing room runs a 5 day a week, 2 shift operation, packing out a variety of frozen vegetables for retail, foodservice, and industrial customers. Approximately 70 employees work across 6 packing lines. To help support the development of equipment competent operators, the start of Cycle 2 saw a restructuring of some of their lines to see an additional 14 permanent employees recruited. The decision to recruit permanent employees rather than using casuals on an ongoing basis was not taken lightly, but it was seen as an essential step forward in forming the Area Based Teams with people who have both the base skills and the mastery skills needed for effective operation. Cycle 2 also saw the roll

out of the TPM³ methodology across the Packing room where TPM³ style meetings, forms, and problem solving were used whenever possible. The desire to bring the improvement activity under a single banner was seen as crucial in communicating a clear and concise message to operators and management: TPM³ is the way that we are going to do it and it is here for the long term!

TPM³ though had its challenges. First and foremost was the demand on resources. To be successful, operators need time to meet and time to try out their ideas. Improvements also need time to be completed and defects need to be rectified. Engineering and maintenance time needs to be made available to do this. A clear plan helped to address some of these concerns. The highly structured approach of TPM³ ensures that there is good follow through of outstanding actions and that root causes are addressed, but it does take some work, effort, and persistence to complete.

The effort and work generated results.

- OEE has increased on the lines where TPM³ has been started.
- There has also been a significant change in operator's involvement and personal development. This has led to a cultural change where, rather than fixing the machines when they get broken, the teams are moving into a "downtime avoidance" approach to their machines.
- The benefit on improved systems is also being seen.

Key learnings for the future include expanding the TPM³ program to the remaining Defined TPM³ Areas (DTAs) within the packing room, to ensure that prior

learnings are capitalised on, reinforcing the behaviours required, and celebrating the successes.

Tim O’Shea (TPM³ Senior Navigator Tasmania) then led an interactive discussion about developing equipment competent operators. Tim was supported by Simon Hodgson (TPM³ Regional Manager Victoria / Tasmania).

A breakout session highlighted the benefits of developing equipment competent operators.

	Tangible	Less Tangible
Business Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost Efficiency • Make more money • Improved safety • Culture Change • Less operator error • Improved efficiency • Improve quality • OEE Improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Fewer accidents and incidents • Less training required • Business lasts longer • Positive company profile
Employee Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better training • More skills • Improved communication • Pride in products produced • Improved safety • Higher skills and knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved morale • Less frustration

Not only are there definite business benefits of developing equipment competent operators, operators also benefit from a workplace that is safer, has better training, a more sustainable business, and reduced frustration and improved morale.

TPM³ provides a structured path for the development of equipment competent operators. Starting with a Macro FE&PI (cross functional improvement team), equipment performance is first improved to free up time for operators to take part in area based team activity. This activity also provides an opportunity for operators and maintainers to work together on the equipment. Work Area Management (WAM), usually completed in the second cycle, then provides operators their first experience of working in Area Based Teams and making some simple changes to their work area to make things easier. Work Area Management also introduces teams to the importance of communication and agreement between the shifts.

Operator Equipment Management (OEM) is normally commenced in the third cycle of the

journey and is an ongoing process of operator development. Stage 1 of OEM focuses on establishing “Basic Equipment Conditions”, fixing defects, removing contamination, and applying simple visual controls. A key focus of TPM³ is learning through doing” and this is reflected in the activities that the operators undertake. One point lessons are used extensively to teach other operators the functioning and purpose of their equipment. Improvement sheets are also used to communicate proposed and completed changes to other shifts.

The benefits of OEM were then discussed as applied at the Simplot Kelso plant. This plant has seen significant benefits through the implementation of TPM³ including a reduction in non conformance due to equipment reliability reducing from 20 to less than 5 per month, a sustained improvement in OEE, and a turn around in the cost performance of the plant.

The discussion was then followed by an opportunity for the delegates to network and share personal experiences.

