Case Study

Precision Measuring Probes Manufacturer

The problem facing this small manufacturer of industrial temperature and pressure probes was that it was taking too long, end-to-end, to manufacture, repair or calibrate small batches of product. As a result, customer orders were often shipped beyond the promised delivery date, making for unhappy customers.

These probes go through a manufacturing process with a dozen or so steps, in different manufacturing cells, over a two week process. At any time there could be between 200 and 400 batches on the production floor.

The manufacturing process involves test and rework steps. In addition there are batches of product that are received back from customers specifically for test and repair. As a result, batches could get "hung up" in the production process waiting for specialized parts from suppliers or simply get overlooked and forgotten at some step in the process.

The biggest problem was that front-office customer support people had no visibility into the status of orders for their customers. As a result, the product manager had to spend over 4 hours each day finding and expediting customer orders for the support staff.

This organization implemented a BellHawk tracking system to locate all the batches in real-time. In their system, a barcoded traveler is produced for each batch. This has barcodes for the job and for each operation in the manufacturing, repair or calibration process. The travelers are kept in the totes which are used to contain the production batches.

Technicians scan the job and step barcodes on the traveler when they start and end work on a job step. They also scan a barcode on their employee badges to identify which employee worked on the operation and how long it took. This tracking information is stored in a database and is available in real-time to the customer support personnel.

As a result:

1. Customer support personnel are able to monitor the status of their customers' orders in real-time and provide accurate delivery-date guidance. This has dramatically reduced the time taken handling phone calls from irate customers about late orders.

2. The production manager no longer has to spend 4 hours a day expediting orders. He now has real-time visibility of the status of all batches and customer orders and can assure that they get the needed parts as quickly as possible and do not get forgotten.

3. The company President now has accurate measures of how long it takes to process customer orders, end-to-end, and can use this as a management tool.

4. The controller now has accurate labor data to use in costing each job.

This was implemented using BellHawk V6 with the server running at a remote corporate site.