

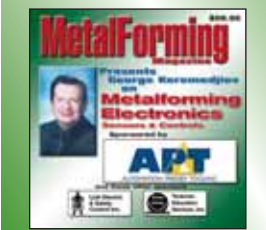


METALFORMING ELECTRONICS GEORGE KEREMEDJIEV

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Maintain Technically Challenging Projects

Many a stamping company is undergoing severe restructuring in this economic meltdown. Yet, there are signs that some firms are maintaining a lit candle of hope through their ongoing technology improvements. Here and there I see technical process enhancements, albeit on a small scale.

We need to maintain our skills. For some shops this means quick-die-change (QDC) procedures that truly are 2 min. or less, as is the case with Marwood Metal Products in Ontario, Canada, which recently posted on the web a video of QDC. For others it is a steady pace of die-sensor implementation toward a fully protected set of progressive dies, as is the case with Gecom in Kentucky and Indiana.

In this column I ask that you keep the technology-innovative spirit alive and not jettison it along with all of the necessary cutbacks in personnel and expenditures.

Think small, but state-of-the-art. Small but technically challenging projects must be kept alive so that your technical personnel's mental prowess does not atrophy. Technical people must be technically challenged on a continuous basis.

This may mean that your sensors and controls personnel are working on several projects, but each one of these programs is relatively small and inexpensive. In some shops, where downsizing is severe, mistake-proofing per-

sonnel are being asked to help out with production and tooling issues on the shop floor.

I urge flexibility and patience for those asked to perform more duties outside of their sensors and controls sphere. As stamping companies downsize all aspects of their operations, sensors and controls personnel may be asked to help run presses, work on dies and otherwise be available to help keep the production process viable. While

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this reality is inevitable for many shops, it does not mean that the mistake-proofing program has been shelved. Rather, the projects assigned to sensors and controls personnel will be small in scale, but ongoing. Thus the creative juices are still allowed to flow regarding clever sensors and controls applications, though on a much smaller scale.

Gone is the heyday of solid orders in sizeable quantities. However, a slowdown in production does not mean the elimination of mistake proofing, rather the downsizing of each project that requires sensors and controls to its basic elements. Instead of 20 sensors on a die you may be able to run it properly with 12. Instead of an expensive PLC you may be able to use a smaller yet adequate model from the same or another vendor. Where a touchscreen was a normal acquisition for a part-measuring fixture, perhaps conventional switches and a keyboard will do. MF



Yeah—it's that good.

It's a great call.

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