More Effective Mold Maintenance: It's All About the Data

When tooling issues are shutting down presses daily and you can't muster the mold maintenance and operating records to figure

CSI learned the value of systematic documentation of mold-maintenance procedures and performance issues. Mold data are entered into the MoldTrax5 database for quick generation of custom reports. (Photo: ToolingDocs)

out why, then like the song says, "Who ya gonna call?" The answer to that question proved crucial to Cosmetic Specialties International (CSI), LLC in Oxnard, Calif. CSI injection molds 200 million jars, caps, liners, and closures annually for the beauty, skin-care, and personal-care industries. It builds much of its own tooling and does its own mold maintenance and repairs.

"We were averaging 15 unscheduled mold stops a week, about three a day," says Chris Gedwed, operations manager. Lack of complete information hampered the search for a solution. "We knew we were experiencing some challenges with regard to data collection. The information was there but we had no centrally located database that allowed us to effectively quantify it."

CSI searched for companies that could provide the consultation and training needed, and narrowed its list of candidates down to three before choosing ToolingDocs, a firm in Ashland, Ohio, created expressly to train mold-repair technicians and spread the gospel of data-driven maintenance management. CSI worked with ToolingDocs on an six-month training program and implemented a computerized mold-maintenance database. The upshot was a reduction in CSI's unscheduled mold stops to about eight a week, or under two a day. "In six months, that saves us around $25,000 in mold downtime," says Gedwed.

The first step was a Maintenance Capability Assessment at CSI, conducted by ToolingDocs global assessment manager Randy Winton. "We showed them the various opportunities for improvement," he says. "They had many of the same issues as other molding operations but couldn't easily pinpoint what their number one mold-stop issues were."

CSI launched a program of Total Systems Implementation (TSI) with ToolingDocs, starting with a Toolroom Maintenance Manager certification course for Gedwed and instruction on use of the MoldTrax5 mold-maintenance information software.

ToolingDocs also conducted an on-site training session for all eight toolroom staff in the "8 Stages of Systemized Mold Maintenance." Says Gedwed, "Given our team's years of experience, it was impressive that each team member walked away confident that he could improve how he managed his own work flow."

Implementing the MoldTrax5 maintenance database "was a main focus for us," says Gedwed. "It pulls out so much information, and after less than six months' time we had over 1000 corrective actions recorded for over 100 molds and 200 inserts in the system."

Gedwed tells how MoldTrax played a crucial role with a customer that came to CSI with a new job involving four molds that required qualification and substantial maintenance. "With MoldTrax we were able to quantify and justify what each mold's maintenance costs were, from labor hours to materials and beyond. When we showed the customer how we were able to track everything in such detail they were just blown away. Before, it would have taken so much time to collect all of this data—now in minutes we can generate customized reports. As a result, this customer is sending more business our way. MoldTrax helped quickly instill a level of trust in us that the customer didn't have with other vendors."

Gedwed emphasizes how crucial MoldTrax is to CSI's short lead times: "We need to diagnose and dissect the issues and get the molds fixed as soon as possible. MoldTrax can isolate certain key pieces of data that help us accomplish that."

ToolingDocs awarded CSI its TSI Certification last June. Gedwed says that credential helped CSI bring two new global customers on board, who were impressed by the competence it signified. **PT**

By Matthew H. Naitove, Executive Editor