

## Best By Any Measure *An excerpt from Industry Week*

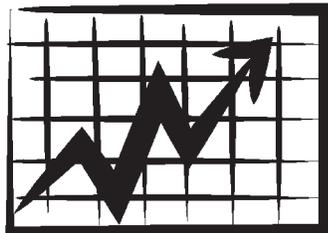
*Industry Week selected one of our clients—Monarch Marking Systems as one their top ten Best Plants for 2000.*

Who knows better the difficulties that plague production than the hourly workforce? Nobody, believes Monarch Marking Systems, a Miamisburg, Ohio-based manufacturer of mechanical price-marking “guns,” electronic bar-code printers, and the labels used by both product lines.

Furthermore, Monarch figures, if plant-floor employees know the problems, they likely are the best source for solutions:

- ◆ Material component suppliers reduced by about 74%
- ◆ Productivity (measured as annual sales per employee) has increased by 45% in the last five years
- ◆ Inventory reduction efforts allowed Monarch to eliminate a 190,000-sq-ft warehouse/office building.

These are but a few examples of Monarch’s Practical Process Improvement (PPI) program, one of several



efforts this Paxar Corporation subsidiary utilizes to drive continuous improvement throughout its operations.

The PPI program relies heavily on harnessing the knowledge of the company’s workers. It provides them with the tools to identify root causes of process weakness, forces them to develop solutions, and trains them to develop even better solutions. Company officials admit that PPI teams may not differ much from what other companies employ—except for a few twists. However, while many other programs have “come and gone” at Monarch, says vice president of operations Jerry Schlaegel, “[PPI teams] have stuck around.”

PPI teams first were introduced in 1996. They succeed, says David Liebrecht, director, quality assurance and product reliability, because they are just one facet of Monarch’s total continuous improvement package. PPI teams are a “cog in the whole wheel,” he says. Other cogs include: “Waste Out,”

*(cont’d on page 2)*

## Flow-Down & Flow Up *By Kristin Arnold*

Does your organization have a methodical, systematic way to communicate important information “down” to all levels, as well as bring information/questions “up?” If not, try this “Flow-Down, Flow-Up” method:

**Senior Team.** The CEO/Leadership team decides what information should be “flowed down” for the period. One team member (a rotated responsibility) captures the information in an e-mail or memo sent to all employees and posted in key strategic areas such as the cafeteria bulletin board.

**Team Leaders.** All team leaders or supervisors meet with their teams for five to ten minutes to discuss the Flow Down. The team leader goes through the information while asking for comments or input from the team. The team leader then sends these comments up to the “collector.”

**Collector.** Usually someone from Human Resources, the collector simply creates an action item list from the comments and inputs. The list identifies the issue, the appropriate team leader or manager to address the issue, as well as a reasonable response deadline.

*(cont’d on page*

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## Team Fun

Teams want to have fun. Spontaneous, unconstrained fun that ranges from the subtle to over-the-top playfulness. Humor at no one’s expense. Fun that makes us smile, giggle or laugh until our sides ache. Fun that allows us to whistle while we work, enjoying the time we spend with our team.

Many team leaders feel it is their responsibility to create fun in the workplace. So they schedule “fun” around birthdays, company picnics and other events. Team leaders make sure the balloons arrive on time, banners are up, and the rest of the team feels obligated to attend and smile throughout the entire ordeal.

To put it bluntly, team leaders suck the spontaneity out of fun. They can’t be the ringmasters because they are compelled to organize, schedule, and manage everything around them.

Fun and playfulness has to come from within the team rather than the top. To allow an environment that encourages fun, try these ideas:

*(cont’d on page 4)*

A newsletter designed to facilitate discussion and share tips and techniques to help your teams to be extraordinary.

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The Extraordinary Team is a quarterly publication distributed to clients, friends and partners of Quality Process Consultants, Inc. Articles are welcome and encouraged. We sincerely would like to know what you are doing.

Quality Process Consultants, Inc. helps your teams to be extraordinary. We specialize in team facilitation services, training and seminars, keynotes and speeches, team implementation consulting and coaching and unique team products.

*Strategic Planning  
Strategic Partnerships  
Collaborative Problem Solving  
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## Best By Any Measure (cont'd)

a program that takes a big step beyond an employee suggestion box by requiring workers to take action rather than make suggestions; a lengthy list of posted metrics that drive the formation of PPI teams; and flow-up/flow-down meetings, twice monthly get-togethers that keep both plant employees and management apprised of each other's activities and concerns (see below article). What differentiates Monarch's PPI program from others of its kind are the output requirements:

- ◆ All problems addressed by PPI teams must be tied to one of the metrics posted visibly throughout the plant.
- ◆ Teams must test their solutions.
- ◆ The team, composed of hourly employees and a team-appointed leader, meets twice a week for no more than two hours at a time. Each team also has a [QPC Inc.-trained] facilitator who cannot be involved in the solution. Instead, the facilitator acts as a coach, accomplishing tasks that the teams does not have time for, running interference where necessary, and helping to present the solutions “in a language the accountants will understand.”
- ◆ Teams have only 30 days to provide an implemented solution.

PPI efforts go hand in hand with Monarch's Waste Out program. But while PPI teams have a formal eight-step process to follow, Waste Out allows employees to contribute to Monarch's continuous-improvement efforts in a more casual manner. Monarch defines a “waste-out” as anything that saves money or that drives waste out of a process. “[A waste-out] can be as simple as the elimination of a multi-part form to the sourcing of a more cost-effective vendor to provide the same quality materials resulting in huge dollar savings,” notes Monarch in its Best Plants application. In 1999 employees submitted about 2,000 fully implemented waste outs.

Employees have good reason to participate in the Waste Out program, as well as the PPI program. Production employees are eligible for quarterly bonuses based on achieving set goals in 10 metrics. Additionally, profit-sharing bonuses are based on meeting operating-income goals.

Good for the company and good for the employees, notes Monarch's [PPI Team Leader] Stewart. “It makes sense to keep Monarch competitive.”

[www.industryweek.com/currentArticles/Asp/articles.asp?ArticleID=915](http://www.industryweek.com/currentArticles/Asp/articles.asp?ArticleID=915)

## Flow Down & Flow Up (cont'd)

**Appropriate Lead.** The team leader or manager assigned to the action item responds to the issue or concern to the Collector. It is the Lead's responsibility to coordinate or “find” the answer, even if the Collector did not select the best possible person to address the issue. The Lead makes sure the issue gets addressed by the right people by the response deadline. If the Lead needs more time to analyze or address the issue, the Lead simply states the “new” response deadline as well as the reasons why more time is needed.

**Collector.** The collector assembles the responses and sends them “up” to the senior team to attach to the next “flow down” cycle.

**Ground Rules.** The only way this process will work is if the senior team, supervisors and collectors agree to this process. This isn't a discretionary item. Participation and adherence to the specified timeframes is mandatory. All the items that “flow up” must be addressed promptly and honestly.

Most teams flow down every week or every two weeks, depending on their recurring needs to get information out to folks as well as their ability to respond to questions and concerns from within the organization.

“Please nominate and recognize your ‘Extraordinary Team’ Simply fill out the enclosed form and tell us why they are so extraordinary!”

Kristin Arnold  
President, Quality Process Consultants, Inc.

extraordinary team

## What’s New at QPC Inc.

Incredibly enough, there’s lots going on in Hampton, VA! Business has been absolutely outstanding, thanks to terrific clients such as McKechnie Vehicle Components, VA-DOD Pollution Prevention Partnership, T. Rowe Price, The Elizabeth River Project, Army Corps of Engineers, Canon Virginia, Missouri Department of Revenue, VA’s Center for Innovative Technology, and Maun-Lemke, Inc.

We were recently evaluated by Dun & Bradstreet on our performance including timeliness, responsiveness, quality, cost, technical, delivery and attitude. We scored an overall rating of 1.12 with 1 being the highest mark of “outstanding” and 2 being “very good.” We are very proud of our high marks and thank all our clients who responded to D&B!

On November 6th, I will be receiving a local award from *Inside Business* magazine recognizing the “Top Forty Under Forty” as one of the individuals who “make Hampton Roads a better place to live and work.” (Managed to make it on the list in the nick of time—I’m turning forty in December!)

Finally, I am just putting the final touches on my new book: *E-mail Basics: Practical Tips to Improve Team Communication*. I am so impressed with the quality of feedback I received from many of you—the book (and title) is so much better now! Expect to see the final product be available just in time for Christmas. Kristin

## Extraordinary Team Day!

### December 4, 2000 is the First Annual Extraordinary Work Team Recognition Day

This day celebrates those teams that consistently work extraordinarily well together to produce significant results for their companies or organizations.

Team leaders, members and management “champions” are encouraged to recognize exceptional team performance. Submit your stories for a chance to win a \$200 gift certificate for the team to spend as they wish—on dinner, a limo ride, concert tickets etc. The team’s organization will also receive a commemorative plaque and letter notifying them of the honor.

To nominate your team, call 800.589.4733 for a nomination form, download from our website at [www.qpcteam.com](http://www.qpcteam.com) or submit a letter with the following information:

1. Team Name, Members and Organization/Company
2. Team Results/Accomplishments
3. What Makes This Team “Extraordinary” (Tell us the story...)
4. Why People Like To Be On This Team
5. Point of Contact Information

Submit your nomination by November 30, 2000. The winner will be announced on December 4th.

## Practical Team Activities: The Sound of Music

### The Sound of Music

To reconnect with team energy.

Time - 5 to 15 minutes

Any Number of Participants

No Materials Required

Songs signify events. Think of TV show theme songs, advertising jingles, college football fight songs and love songs that couples adopt as “our song.” We play “Pomp and Circumstance” at graduations, “Ave Maria” at weddings, and “We are the Champions” at sporting events.

Most people have a connection with music whether it’s contemporary music, oldies, pop, classical, country, jazz, R&B, opera—you get the idea!

Frank Pacetta suggests that “Music is pure emotion. It has the capacity to form an almost chemical bond with whatever other stray molecules of emotion that are whirring around to form unforgettable and powerful combinations that heighten emotion and excitement.”

Try this activity to discover the music that energizes your team:

Ask the team to list their top five (or ten) favorite songs. Then ask them to think back to a moment connected with each piece of music. Chances are, they will rediscover “emotional blasts from the past.”

Ask each team member to share their list of five (or ten), pick a tune and share the memory.

After the team has shared their musical moments, ask:

- ◆ Where else in our lives do we use music to inspire and energize?
- ◆ How can we use the emotional energy of music in our team?
- ◆ How can we use music to lighten our load and enjoy our work?

### Kristin’s Top Ten

The Sound of Music—Julie Andrews  
Son of a Sailor—Jimmy Buffet  
Lucky Man—Emerson, Lake & Palmer  
I Don’t Want to Live w/o You—Foreigner  
Ripples—Genesis  
Iris—Goo-Goo Dolls  
Magic Man—Heart  
House at Pooh Corner—Kenny Loggins  
Funny Girl—Barbara Streisand  
Africa—Toto

“Many companies have...arranged for teams...to read assigned portions, then discuss the application of the book’s ideas in their companies.”

Roger E. Herman  
*Keeping Good People*

extraordinary team

## From the Bookshelf



I first met Roger Herman at the National Speakers Association (NSA) Eastern Regional Workshop in Atlanta in 1998. A gracious and unassuming man, our paths have crossed from time to time—the most recent as he was peering up at me from the pages of *Fast Company* (October 2000)!

He sent me a copy of his newest book “How to Become an Employer of Choice” (ISBN 1-886939-35-7) as well as “Keeping Good People” (ISBN 1-886939-26-8). I must confess, the two books sat on my shelf for several weeks....

Interestingly enough, my secretary Neicy, picked up “Keeping Good People” while I was out of the office. When I returned, she mentioned that she thought a certain strategy would help me and our business. And she was right!

Full of “one page strategies,” this book provides some terrific team conversation. Pick a strategy, read it and then discuss its implications on your team and how the team works together. Some random examples:

- Strategy 1.17 Promote a healthy working environment
- Strategy 2.27 Be accessible
- Strategy 3.35 Fight Boredom
- Strategy 4.15 Provide incentives for growth
- Strategy 5.15 Give away lottery tickets

Our QPC Inc. team decided to discuss one of these strategies each time we meet (usually at “tea time” held at 3pm each day). While some of the strategies may not apply, it does create a space for great conversation. When given the opportunity, team members or “employees” will reinforce what’s working well *and* tell you what they need to be successful.

## Team Fun (cont’d from p. 1)

**Talk About Fun.** Have a great discussion within the team about what fun and playfulness is all about. Allow the team to kick around ideas that might work. Give them verbal and non-verbal cues to encourage involvement.

**Fish.** There’s a terrific video and book titled “Fish” that shows how a Seattle fish market turned their days from ho-hum to lots of fun and play. Watch the video and discuss how it might apply to the team.

**Be Spontaneous.** Encourage the team to seek out ways to play “in the moment.” Fun is all around us. We just have to take advantage of those moments. For example, one team keeps a digital camera in their workspace so that anyone can take a picture of something fun and share it with the rest of the team.

**Have a Kitty.** Let’s face it. Some fun things cost money. Not a lot of money, but a few bucks here and there. Let others know that they can be reimbursed when they create fun. For example, on “Eat Your Green Vegetables Day,” two women on the dietary team served lunch in rented green artichoke costumes. It was a small amount of money that had the entire organization laughing for days!

**Keep Your Preferences to Yourself.** As team leader, you might prefer to go to a hockey game. If you mention it (or anything else) they might go along with your idea—and you have the huge potential to be coordinating the fun again! Back off. You have lots of other things to do. Let the team figure out how to have fun.

## What Do You Find in Others? *By Dakota Livesay*

A story that took place in the East is told of a young man who came to an oasis. He asked an old man by the well, “What kind of people live here?”

The old man asked, “What kind of people lived in the place where you just left?”

“They were a bad lot,” replied the young man. “I was glad to leave them.”

“You’ll find the same here,” said the old man.

Later another man came by the oasis and he asked the old man the same question. The old man also asked him about the people who lived in the town he had just left.

With a smile on his face, “They were great people. Honest. Friendly,” said the young man.

“You’ll find the same here,” replied the old man.

A friend who was with the old man asked how he could give two completely different answers to the same question.

The old man explained, “Each person carries within him the environment in which he lives. No matter where we go people are the same. People are to us what we ourselves find in them.”

