

BLACK BELT FOR VALVES

Interview with Claire Barboni, Global Project Management,
HOERBIGER Corporation of America Inc.

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DIALOG: Ms Barboni, your company is known as a global leader in the fields of compression technology, automation technology, and drive technology – a very competitive environment. Which significance had the Six Sigma project at Pompano Beach, Florida/USA, set up to improve the quality and cycle times for finishing of polymer plates, for your company?

CB: Using the principles from Six Sigma we were able to accomplish several things. Lapping is a critical operation because almost all products go through this process. It can easily become a bottleneck which is why the decision was made to make a

lighthouse project. The first obstacle was standardizing the process. It became clear that with the existing tooling and training, the operators each had their own method for operation. Using the scientific approach we, as a team, were able to find the best process for operation and make it a standard. Through creating a standard procedure we have a more efficient process that better utilizes 'up time' and decreases machine 'down time'. By focusing and thoroughly reviewing the area, we discovered ways to make further improvements.

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DIALOG: Your site and project team underwent a SixSigma BlackBelt certification. From your perspective, which positive impact have the six sigma principles on the operational excellence of your production site?

CB: The team was made up of myself, an operator, the plant manager, and with the guidance of ROI master black belts. I went through black belt training and the plant manager went through green belt training.





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Through the training we learned how to use the tools of six sigma: to quantify a problem and analyze the current state as well as develop a plan to tackle the issue most effectively while keeping in mind the critical points to customer and quality characteristics. Clear instruction on how to run a project with steps in proper sequence to reach a solution was very important. Too often we try to tackle a problem with a solution in mind and this prevents us from seeing the whole picture. Six Sigma teaches us to look at all the facts before drawing conclusions and implementing a solution.

DIALOG: *Were standardization and modularization of products and processes a relevant question for the project?*

CB: The Six Sigma Lapping Projects was all about both of these topics. First we had to standardize the improved machining process so that everyone was working the same. Then we were able to continue improvement by modularizing the cell (moved the machines for multi-machine operation, changing emulsion to remove the washing process, best practice sharing for grinding technology, improving the tools – carriers – necessary for proper grinding).

DIALOG: *At HOERBIGER are the development of technology roadmaps and the search for alternative raw materials a regular process?*

CB: Yes. HOERBIGER is continuously striving to achieve improvements through researching cutting edge technological developments. The company has teams of very bright engineers and managers who help inspire the team. Sometimes it is a challenge with plastic to source alternative raw materials because our blends are proprietary and highly engineered. However, our procurement team works in conjunction with engineering and processes are in place for testing materials.

DIALOG: *You were awarded with the STEP (women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Production) Award this year. The initiative promotes the role of women in the manufacturing industry e.g. in reference to Education. How important are training programs at HOERBIGER and which impact do they have on operational excellence?*

CB: HOERBIGER has shown a strong commitment to training knowing that further education will only make the company stronger. HOERBIGER Corporation of America wants to make sure everyone has the tools they need to succeed and continuous training is very important tool. HOERBIGER's commitment to training is part of its culture of continuous improvement – it is key to the company's achievement of operational excellence.

DIALOG: *HOERBIGER is a multi national group. How do you organize the exchange of knowhow between different sites and secure the realization of synergies worldwide?*

CB: I believe that exchange of knowhow and creating a worldwide synergy is extremely important for the company. The annual production conference two years ago kicked off a global initiative (brought together by ROI) to establish Best Practice Sharing. Over the last two years, the company has reorganized the project teams so that we each report our findings, technological advancements, and successes to centralized leadership. This allows us to not only know what is going on in the other locations, but to share the information and improve HOERBIGER as a whole worldwide.

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HOERBIGER

is a global leader in the fields of compression technology, automation technology, and drive technology. In 2012, its 6,700 employees achieved sales of approximately 1.06 billion euros. The focal points of its business activities include key components and services for compressors, gas-powered engines, and turbomachinery, hydraulic systems and piezo technology for vehicles and machine tools, as well as components and systems for shift and clutch operations in vehicle drive trains of all kinds.

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