

## **The New MRO Normal – Doing More With Less**

So we hear a lot about the “New Normal” in business these days. Most often it is used to describe our new economic outlook. It is also used to describe the new business outlook. I have even seen it used to describe the changing temperatures on our planet and these may all be big picture truths. It is hard to deny that there truly is a “New Normal” for each of these facets of life and the world. So what does this mean beyond the big picture? What does this mean to our everyday lives? What does this mean to our work? What does this mean to the management of MRO materials?

OK...I agree. It seems very odd to take a lofty discussion about how the world is changing economically and environmentally and apply it to something that is not typically given much thought. Even in the world of manufacturing where the use of MRO material is critical to production, it has not been given much thought over the last 20 years. So why in the world should we change our thinking because we are living in the self titled “New Normal”? What used to be a mediocre task to make sure people had materials to complete their job is now being reconsidered. The “just get it” kind of attitude that most manufacturers used in the past with regards to MRO materials is changing.

There are several reasons for this change:

1. We Have to Do More with Less – After the recent layoffs, buy outs and cuts in work force, manufacturers are forced to manage MRO materials with less man power. Because of this manufacturers are relying on their distributors and technology more to help with the work load.
2. Bottom Line – A more defined focus on the bottom line has changed the way the cost of MRO and other indirect material is being viewed. Along with this change is a desire to achieve optimum inventory levels and proven cost reductions across the enterprise.
3. Lean Initiatives are Reaching the MRO Level – Lean initiatives are not new in the world of manufacturing but in times past, waste elimination plans typically have not included a focus on MRO. Recently, with the on-set of new technology available to manage MRO, usage, cost and waste reduction, there is proof of a substantial area for savings.
4. Forced Culture Change – Because there are less resources, workers are somewhat forced to change the way they have always done things. To achieve success when implementing new processes, it has to be non-obtrusive and as easy as possible for the workers who have less resources.

So how does RFID help in this scenario? Well...to begin with...RFID by itself simply won't help anything in this scenario. RFID integrated into an indirect material or MRO inventory management system is where your focus should be. Along with that, you should be looking intently at current processes with not only the thought of eliminating waste in mind, but also that all important aspect of changing culture. Your focus should be on making the processes of obtaining, reordering and managing MRO materials easier. So this is exactly where RFID helps. The automatic identification capabilities of RFID are non-intrusive. The ability to trigger transactions while securely storing MRO items adds no additional steps to retrieve inventory from a cabinet, store room or drawer system. RFID becomes that critical component to make the “New Normal” easier than the “Old Normal”.

The “New Normal” is more with less. The “New Technology” helps us achieve success. So you can sit in management meetings saying things like, “Why can't these guys just get these things ordered and delivered on time?”, or you can use available technology to make it easier for your people to work in the “New Normal”. So although we can't change rising temperatures across our planet, we can easily make things more productive when it comes to managing MRO materials and maybe...just maybe...we can stop sweating so much over the bottom line. Welcome to the “New MRO Normal”.

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WinWare Inc. was established in 1992 in Marietta, GA., just outside Atlanta. WinWare is the clear leader when it comes to flexible, robust systems to manage MRO, tools and spare parts inventory. Its knowledgeable and experienced staff is dedicated to creating enterprise-wide systems that manage tools and indirect material in productive environments. WinWare has a long-term reputation for providing outstanding customer service and technical support for each of its customers, no matter how large or small. The company is committed to providing expert software and hardware solutions.