

## **32nd Storyworth: Are You A Morning Or A Nighttime Person?**

I am more of a situational person, really, because I have been found working long hours on every shift when working the various projects in my career. Since retirement, however, I am less and less a morning person, and it is far from unusual to see me sleeping until noon despite actually going to bed at a reasonable hour the night before. I just often find myself waking up and doing something for a couple hours through the night, taking care not to disturb Dawn as much as possible ;-)

During my career, I worked with manufacturers primarily, at least before working with Lynne and her medical practice. And most manufacturers ran multiple shifts because it was more efficient than having to invest capital because of use on only a single shift. Typical were two shifts, except in highly energy intensive activities like heat treat, when the cool-down cycle could not be justified. Those typically worked around the clock, and had staggered hours for employees' overlap to minimize wasted overtime costs. Variences in manufacturing needs were handled by equipment shutdowns which lasted at least a week, but where that equipment also had multiple examples so they could accommodate changing demands and down-time for maintenance.

I first saw that kind of effort at my pre-professional work at Virginia Chemicals, where I had disassembled the press station on their multi-stage transfer machine to fix an OEM oversight in omitting jam nuts on hydraulic presses. That, of course, led to my learning machine control logic and symbology in electrical, pneumatic and fluidics, which I applied throughout my professional career elsewhere. As previously noted, though, I had an innate mechanical skill which enabled me to recognize the issue in the first place, so I was simply the right guy at precisely the right moment and place, and was effectively, if belatedly, rewarded for it ;-)

Virginia Chemicals operated on two shifts, with the third for spillover when customers' needs were involved. Since they made refrigerant filters for automotive AC systems, they were very much seasonal as well, a subject I learned about well in advance of its truest applicability when I worked with Duracell, which had to "fill the pipeline" for the high demand fall season, because they were primarily a "point-of-sale" "impulse item", so had to be in retailer inventory for the Holiday Season. So they were a bit contrarian, vs automotive OEM clients, in that they were full tilt boogie on all shifts through the summer, but doldrums as late fall to spring occurred, while the automotive OEM demands needed to have their pipelines full in late spring, almost directly opposite.

Fafnir and Rollway were more of a mixed bag because they both supplied industrial bases, which were flatter demands throughout the year, except for the specific automotive demands. But those two companies had specifically heat treatment, which as noted earlier was a round-the-clock operation so they did not lose the heat soaking energy investment. One note; while with Rollway, we had a natural gas "crisis" which limited availability. So I ran a specific project to implement an induction heating furnace, which would heat bearing rings and rollers electrically via non-touch RF energy so they could then be oil quenched to create hard contact surfaces for the bearings. That project had been something of an emergency response, so required me to literally work multiple shifts without a break so we had tooling etc in place when it hit our doors.

I had a similar multi-shift effort when I ran the TRW recall program for their RKE Transmitters for Ford until we were certain the process was operating smoothly, because we had promised a rapid turn-around for delivery back to customers of their door lock operating remotes, and so I had to be available to address ANY glitch which might have interfered with that plan. Thankfully, my prior background with bulk mailing, when I had first developed my private-label Holiday Greeting Cards to work with text merging databases, which turned out to be a failed business venture, left me with enough knowledge to save a HUGE amount on the cost for that recall vs the planned alternative second-day air freighting after the rework of the transmitters.

Because of the unique accounting at Duracell, as noted last week, three shift operation of their captive packaging was essential. So my availability on-floor was similarly so. Gratefully, that implementation went more smoothly than I had ANY right to expect, not least because it was a VERY politically charged atmosphere, where people sought others to blame rather than finding ways to make things work. I consider it remarkable that I also had the ability to work with their contract packager, J&J, at a plant where they really had no clue what the Dilbert cartoons were all about, because their approach to managing and operation was so diametrically opposite. And which easily explained their literally stealing business from the captive plants where you might otherwise have expected them to not be cost competitive vs the captive plants. But they ate the captives' lunches on a REGULAR basis!

One upshot of that was an experience I consider to have been an ultimate public compliment and professional kudo – I was invited and joined some of their team who put on for the community a 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks Display at the shore of the state park lake there. I was up late, but limited my intake (as I ALWAYS did) to non-alcoholic beverages, then gingerly dodged the good-ole-boys who obviously had NOT, as they headed home afterwards. Then, as my usual practice, I bought donuts for the crew the following workday (thankfully, NOT in the next morning ;-) to show my appreciation. But I still had to be there for the morning shift ;-)

Having also worked at Fastek, a Kodak venture into Reverse osmosis and specialty filters, I had my share of off-shift responsibilities. But as with most of my career, I was paid a salary as an employee, which had an SOP of “work as many hours as needed to get the job done, then take off whatever you need until the next crisis shows its ugly head”. Unfortunately, THOSE seemed all too frequent, although NOT because of MY oversight.

Of course, while traveling for GE late in my professional career as an independent, my time was not my own to define. I often got fewer than four hours between notification and my butt on an airplane flying toward some foreign assignment for god alone knew what duration. I well recall one episode where I had a line of electronic control panels which were to be produced in Bavaria by a GE subsidiary. So I flew to Zurich, where we knew I would later have a high-voltage switchgear to inspect at ABB there near Oerlikon, but instead of spending ANY time at first there, took a train to the GE plant right from the airport. I returned to the Swissotel by the ABB plant a few days later after the GE folks had completely missed the spec for use of SIS wiring, which has a special silicone jacket which gives off no gasses, unlike a conventional PVC jacket which gives off chlorine gas during burning, which is lethal, and completely inappropriate for an electrical grid control application.

How they missed it was anyone's guess, but they had to COMPLETELY rewire the thing, and I wound up spending almost two weeks in Western Germany when I had expected to be there two DAYS, living from my one bag which had my CPAP and my 240X Thinkpad computer, which had been bought by me because GE IT thought I should lug around a “laptop” the size of the White House. I learned VERY early to adapt wires and things so I could lug a single “brick” to power a host of equipment, because every gram and cc mattered for mobility. Thankfully, that pre-dated 9/11, because TSA would surely have thought I was a bomb maker from the evidence. Which ALL had to fit my one bag so it could carry-on to any airline I might need to take at a moment's notice, because I could not afford the m to allow it to become lost checked baggage with my typical single-day duration jobs. My bags would never have caught up to ME ;-)

And as you can see, planning for my schedule, at least prior to working with Lynne, gradually became less and less predictable for not just clock, but calendar and continent as well ;-) And was a career I would gladly still be doing if GE's client ENRON had not been cooking their books, which resulted in my losing that GE SQE gig which I considered the best of my career. I think of it often, mostly with sadness, until it makes me laugh ;-)

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