

Forensically Tracking the Causes; Involve the Team, and Keep an Independent Mindset

A company producing high value pharmaceuticals had been experiencing customer complaints about their bulk product packaging which was splitting open at the customer sites, resulting in too-frequent clean-ups, contamination and wastage of the product itself and loss of confidence by the customer. They had attempted to track down the cause of the problem, but struggled to pin it down.

This is their story:

“We’re having ongoing long-term persistent problems in the filling of our products into 25 kg sacks. We invested heavily in a robotised pallet loading system but the issue we’ve suffered over the last 18 months is a persistently high failure rate in bag sealing (heat sealing) and a rising rate of customer complaints. We’ve subsequently invested in ‘state of the art’ industry-leading heat sealers but the ongoing issue is with the bag presentation to the heat sealer. This is where I specifically require the assistance of an independent consultant who can help diagnose the nature of our problems.



“We’re not experts in sack-filling equipment. Our recent experience over the last 18 months has been to talk to suppliers who are keen to sell us their products.

“I feel we need some expertise, analysis and diagnostics before we invest in yet more expensive equipment!

*“To this end, I’m keen to find someone independent and sufficiently qualified and experienced to work with us on a paid fee basis to help us define **exactly** what our problem with bag presentation is, as opposed to a vendor trying to sell us the ‘next solution’.*

“I’m hoping MAT can either help us directly or point me in the direction of someone who can. “

This was a problem that had been ongoing for a number of months, and our client had made repeated attempts to track down the cause and find a lasting resolution themselves.

The key reason for selecting MATL was that they wanted a fully independent assessment of the cause of their problem, without the feeling that a particular solution would be guided based on the sale of some more equipment. They wanted the confidence that they had a full and unbiased opinion.



Before even setting foot on site, or even being awarded a contract, we talked through the background of the problem, what actions had been taken already and where the client thought the root of the problem lay. Having already spent quite a number of days investigating this over the previous months, the client was able to share photos and notes of discussions already in hand.

One of the reasons we like to have a no-obligation discussion with clients before taking on any work, is so that we can make sure that we can definitely add value and not to duplicate efforts already taking

place. The extensive and comprehensive information that the Client had gathered enabled us to package up some outline areas for consideration with our tender.



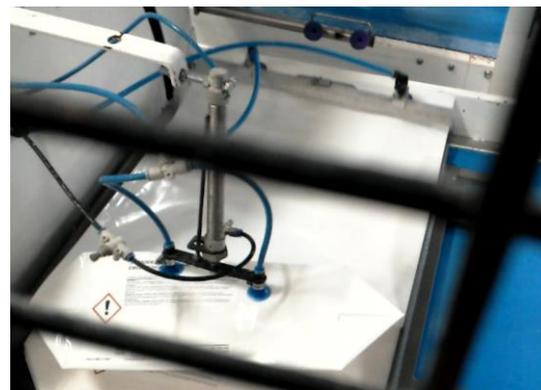
We needed to see the plant in action to be able to isolate the causes of the packaging failure. We were confident that if there had been just one root cause, the client would have already resolved it.

The client had ensured that the plant was operating whilst we watched and was keen to allow access to whatever and whoever we needed to get the most from an observation visit, and also followed up with additional videos showing various problems that had been discussed during the visit.

Whilst watching for the specific fault to occur, we also observed other machine behaviours which could contribute to the original problem but also created inefficiencies and stoppages. We were also able to speak with the operations and maintenance personnel to find out their opinions and what actions they may have taken previously, the full detail of which may not always be able to be recorded.

By breaking down the process into separate stages we were able to isolate a range of actions and potential problems along with likely causes, although with a live operating plant, some of these could not be confirmed at the time.

Our report included details of the likely causes, suggested solutions and an outline cost benefit analysis so that the client could prioritise and select actions that they could take internally to try to reduce the occurrences in the shortest time.



We know that problems reported don't necessarily provide the whole story, and it requires a forensic and non-critical approach to be able to tease the information out to gain a full understanding of the causes and reasons. This results in an active ownership of the solution by all personnel and confidence by plant management that their problem can be removed.

Contact MAT Ltd and we will help your business improve its efficiencies and processes.



SOLUTIONS - NOT JUST ANSWERS

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