

Connector

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Firefighting: Preventative Action vs Corrective Action

Quality audits have long been recognized as a cornerstone of the continual improvement process and are a key element in virtually all quality programs in all industries. According to Bob Einsig, Quality Manager, comprehensive quality audits are done regularly at Die-Tech to assess their performance and effectiveness.

Einsig reveals that Die-Tech was recently audited and recertified in ISO:9001 & ISO-TS:16949. This means that Die-Tech has a set of procedures for all key processes in the business. "We continually monitor our processes," he adds. "We test and document whether products meet design specifications and customer needs."



Any non-conformance at Die-Tech leads to immediate corrective action. But, according to Einsig, corrective action is similar to firefighting. Firefighting puts out the imminent threat, but when the smoke eventually clears, you still have to worry about the fire reigniting. Firefighters know it is critical to recognize the conditions that create the potential for combustion. Fires are extinguished by targeting the source, but understanding the cause eliminates future disaster. It's all about [prevention](#). By focusing on preventive action, Die-Tech can avert non-conformance problems before they occur. Einsig explains. "We do this by integrating the disciplines of lean manufacturing with Six Sigma to prevent any defects that interfere with meeting the customers' needs or expectations."

Einsig offers the following comparison between corrective action and preventive action. Corrective action might be used after a late delivery to investigate what caused its occurrence. A preventive action would be the creation of a process to monitor workflow to avoid late deliveries. When Die-Tech receives an order for a customized stamping die, an Execution Team comprised of a representative from every department is formed.

The Execution Team starts with customer demand and rigorously maps each step throughout the production process. Analyzing this map helps the team identify where they can [eliminate waste](#) and non-value activities, and therefore shorten lead-time and improve workflow. Once the plan is created and agreed upon by all members of the team, dates and time frames are assigned to each step. These are then published and hung in each department. "By posting our expectations in each department, we can easily see what needs to be done, along with dates. We hold ourselves personally accountable to meet our customers' delivery expectations."

Einsig continues, "We are taking a proactive rather than a reactive approach to all manufacturing operations. Improving the design of a tool to increase the speed of the press, changing the process flow to get material from one location to another quicker, and communicating more regularly with suppliers and customers are just a few more examples of prevention."

"Preventative action, admits Einsig, is a way of life." Although Die-Tech quality metrics exceed industry standards, Einsig explains that they are not satisfied. "We continually look for ways to control costs and produce a finished product in a shorter time."

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