



WINNING formula

Success of the Coors Shenandoah Brewery is less about its energy-efficient technology, but rather about the people.



- *Focused Improvement project savings totalled \$600 000 for the year*
- *50% improvement in beer loss on the keg line*
- *Year on year improvement of 8.7% in overall line rates*
- *Beverage World Plant of the year 2008*



One of 11 breweries of the MillerCoors Brewing Company, the state-of-the-art Coors Shenandoah brewery is located five miles south of Elkton, Virginia in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley. With 9 500 employees worldwide and annual sales of more than US\$ 6.19 billion MillerCoors is one of the world's largest brewers.

Originally opened as a packaging operation, the Shenandoah brewing facility was brought on line in March 2007. The brewery includes two brew lines, fermentation and aging equipment, grain handling (eight silos, two mill streams) and several structures to house controls and related processes. As part of the expansion project, Coors Shenandoah also upgraded its packaging capabilities. In addition to the existing keg, bottle and can lines, the plant now has a 1 200-bottle-per-minute changeover bottle line and a new high-speed canning line that runs 2 150 cans a minute. The new lines incorporate leading packaging technology to create a highly automated process.

A star performer for MillerCoors, the brewery's 450-strong workforce packaged a record-breaking 6.78 million barrels of beer in 2007. In 2003 the WCM journey in Shenandoah started by adopting TRACC as the guiding system. The initial focus was on short-term gains via Kaizen blitzes, while simultaneously implementing the foundation TRACCs to achieve sustainability. These produced significant savings in CO₂, water, steam and other materials in selected pilot areas. Two years later a rapid expansion of WCM implementation was rolled out to include non-pilot areas.

The next two years also saw commissioning of a new bottling and can line as well as the final start-up phase of the new brewery. This stretched internal resources and implementation slowed to accommodate increased demand on resources. After big personnel shifts to man the new lines and brewery, the plant started to rebuild internal capability to implement WCM in 2007. The keg line was chosen to progress the depth of understanding of implementation in the plant, without interrupting other operation areas. Despite often conflicting priorities, this line soon achieved a breakthrough in application and understanding of many of the foundation WCM techniques. This was possible only because of encouragement from senior management and sheer workforce perseverance.

Self-directed work teams

With only 24 operators running the brewery in four shifts 24/7, including everything from grain intake to brewing to packaging, it's a process that seems to run almost on its own. The same applies to packaging, which has six lines running across four shifts with only

four team leaders. This means that shop floor teams are controlling their lines independently of supervision - a work method that would never have been possible without an engaged workforce.

Shenandoah uses the 'WCM Triangle' to describe World Class Manufacturing. Each side of the triangle represents People, Practices and Performance, but it would be justified to add a fourth 'P' - for Perseverance.

People, performance and practices

Coors has long had a strong commitment to people. The Coors winning formula strives to create a winning culture through developing, retaining, attracting and rewarding the right talent; leveraging diversity; promoting wellness; and creating a safe workplace. It's significant that many of the TRACC implementation actions have been implemented and applied by the operators with less support than usual, where each shift-based team has a team leader with supporting representation from Maintenance and Quality. The high engagement levels by the hourly workforce also have supported implementation in a flat organisational structure. Base staffing is 42 employees to each team leader, but in the summer, w/temps swell to 54:1.

A recent TRACC Best Practice rating on the keg line shows that the journey's still in progress, but the growing understanding of how to do implementation and workforce engagement on WCM in Shenandoah means that important foundations are being put in place. Overall, the packaging department has shown a remarkable improvement in productivity over the last four quarters, including an 8.7% year on year improvement in overall line rates. At the same time, the keg line has shown an excellent 50% improvement in beer loss since 2005.

The 2007 Focused Improvement project savings were about US\$600 000 for the year, but perhaps the most fitting accolades are from outside parties. These include: Beverage World Plant of the Year for 2008; OSHA VPP Star Status; MolsonCoors EHS Plant of the Year 2006 and 2007. Said Fred Dooley, packaging and WCM manager at Coors Shenandoah, "It gets back to our people and our commitment to be the best, safest and most productive brewery in the world." Achieving this vision will be done with great people and a passion for WCM excellence.

