



How Many Employees do I Really Need?

Performing a workflow analysis to understand current and future staffing needs.

It has always been a challenge to truly understand the right staffing levels for an organization and to plan staffing levels for the future with a certain level of accuracy. In many cases the management has one view and supervisors and associates have a totally different view of how many employees are needed. There is a fair and scientific method to understand the right staffing levels using industrial engineering methods and time and motion studies. This article will talk about the challenges and approach to meet business needs and provide a fair solution supervisors and associates can support.



The first step is understanding the amount of time it takes to perform work and then use that data to determine staffing levels. This is done by;

1. Meeting with management to define the work processes that are included in the staffing plan.
2. Collecting details about each work process to be studied and breaking down the work process into elements.
3. Gaining agreement on the work elements for each work process.
4. Performing time and motion studies, studying each work element, collecting adequate data for each element and work process.
 - a. Factored into the calculations are breaks, pace of work being performed, fatigue, indirect activities, etc.
5. Analyzing the data collected and developing “standard” times for each work process.
6. Reviewing the data with supervisors and associates and validating the times.
7. Gaining agreement on work process times and finalizing the results.



Using the data you have collected to determine how much the average worker can do in each working hour is the next step. Then you can apply work times to the current work volumes and understand current staffing level needs.



Next you can examine the volume statistics and apply the time and motion study data for the business to determine staffing needs during the peak, average and slow periods. To staff for the peak across the board will drive cost higher and not be a very efficient use of resources and staffing to support only the slow period can drive overtime costs up and employee satisfaction down. A blended approach is generally recommended utilizing the data and forecasting when to pull the “triggers” to staff appropriately. In some cases, this can be done by using temporary employees to support the peak and staff with full time employees for the average. The good news is, the organization will now have accurate data to make sound decisions and it is no longer a mystery how many employees are needed.

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