

**BLOG:                    BENCHMARKING, INFORMANCE/EMI**

*TARGET:                SEPT 20, 2011*

*AUTHOR:                DIANE MURRAY*

*POSSIBLE TITLES: UNFINISHED BUSINESS*

As a teenager, it only took once or twice to figure out that it didn't matter how much time I spent on planning, research and writing, if I simply forgot that all-important report on the kitchen table when I headed off to school. The effort was entirely wasted, and I would have been better off killing time instead. It was like preparing for a party where I'd forgotten to invite the guests – absolutely useless.

I've come to realize that benchmarking in manufacturing is sometimes like that – operations folks collect data, analyze the details, graph the metrics, and present findings – but why? What's the next step? Sometimes we forget that pushing for bigger numbers, without a clear understanding of why we're doing it or how we're going to get there, might simply end in frustration. Or worse, we might be striving for something that doesn't even have an impact on corporate goals.

Benchmarking is only useful if I take the next step and ask "why" and "how" and dig deeper to understand the underlying causes of performance – good or bad. Frankly, who cares if overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) on one line is 68 while another is 78, if I don't investigate the reasons and carefully examine the success factors of the better line?

In manufacturing, OEE is an excellent measure for pulse checks and benchmarking in its simplest form – but does it really tell the whole story? Why *\*does\** one line perform better than another? In the quest to understand, making simple assumptions that factors like newer machinery, better maintenance programs, or more readily available raw material is taking the easy way out. And, "gut instinct" never really paints the true picture anyway.

If you're really serious about benchmarking performance in manufacturing, read about how measures relate to each other, and why it's important to hone in on the right set of diagnostic metrics, in Closing the Perception Gap by Solarsoft.

[http://info.solarsoft.com/Closing-Perception-Gap\\_Form.html](http://info.solarsoft.com/Closing-Perception-Gap_Form.html)