Technology and People in the Railroad Industry

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"It's All About The People"

- You can have the latest and greatest technology in the whole wide world, but the employees must buy-in and embrace it, AND BE TRAINED on how to use it….
- <u>WHY</u> is this new technology here?
- <u>WHAT</u> will it do for (or to) me?
- <u>ATTITUDE</u> - How do I feel about it?
- <u>TRAINING</u> – How do I use it?

(Now a couple of amusing stories to make my point)

The Case Of The Stalled Ore Train

Cleveland to Weirton, WV, Ore Train Stalls On The Cleveland Line (1990)

- Railroad is upgrade (big time) from Lake Erie
- 100 ore jennies, loaded iron ore pellets
- Train stalls right in front of the yard office
- Diesel Maintainer and I are "On the Scene!"
- He has a BIG pipe wrench, and I supposedly have an engineering degree….
- But the locomotives are computer controlled
- "Maybe we can turn it off and then turn it back on, huh Joe??

And The Results?

- We knew WHY the railroad wanted more efficient, computer controlled locomotives
- We knew WHAT we had since all the screens were blinking an error message of some kind and the train was stalled…
- We had great ATTITUDES (we really wanted to get the train moving – Pittsburgh was yelling on the phone and radio)
- BUT – WE HAD NO TRAINING and HAD NO IDEA HOW TO FIX IT !
- (I think a Road Foreman or Tech Rep got it moving later)

A Personal Computer Arrives at the Ashtabula Harbor Yardmaster's Desk in Northeast Ohio!

The Yardmaster's Computer

- Ashtabula Harbor was still a punch card operation when I started (Am I that old?)
- The Personal Computer arrives!
- Grouchy Yardmaster with almost 40 years service is on daylight…
- Not pleased, "Not going to use this thing!"
- Training commenced….

And The Results?

- WHY – Keep better track of cars in the yard
- WHAT – Could make my job easier, although the clerk might get laid off…
- ATTITUDE – Might not be so bad after all…
- TRAINING – That guy from Philadelphia showed me how to use it…

"Let me find your car for you in the computer!"