

TIKKA RE-ROLLING MILLS case study solution



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Short Description

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Description

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Mr. Ramesh, aged 56, was a senior operative in one of the rolling units of the Tikka Re-Rolling Mills, which had 3,000 employees on the rolls. He had joined the company 35 years earlier as a semi-skilled worker and had risen to his present position by dint of hard work.

In the rolling units, steel billets (rough square bars 50-125 sq. mm.) obtained from steel plants, were heated to 1300C° in reheating furnaces and were rolled into smaller sections according to the requirements of the market. This process involved the reduction of billets to the desired size by stages, by passing them through a set of rolls mounted on a housing. Any delay in rolling interrupted the subsequent processing of finished steel products. The rolling operation in each unit was controlled by three operatives who worked on a raised platform called 'the rolling gallery', just by the side of the mill. They had to manipulate, separately, but in perfect unison, the different controls for rolling. This involved operating the rolling tables to move billets forward and backward, giving correct passes in between the rolls, applying the right pressure on the rolls to the size of billets, etc. The work demanded quick reflex action as well as effective coordination on the part of the operatives.

Mr. Ramesh was one of the three operatives forming a group. He became less and less effective in co-ordinating the controls, with the result that the number of billets rolled per hour in his unit dropped. His supervisors were however satisfied that there was no deliberate attempt on his part to slow down operations. They could attribute this fall in performance only to his advancing age. His two colleagues were 35 and 40 years old. As the unit's production continued to suffer and upset the production schedule of the subsequent units, the departmental manager felt compelled to take action in order to remedy the situation. He therefore recommended to the General Manager that Mr. Ramesh be replaced by a younger operative. The General Manager delayed acting on this recommendation. He was aware of the fact that about 35% of the employees of the company were over 50 years old and that Mr. Ramesh was, not the only operative creating a bottleneck in the organisation. In considering the proposal, he came to know that as the three operatives worked on the rolling gallery in close proximity, they had developed an intimate group feeling. Since the working group was small and the nature of their work involved separate manipulation of controls, they were unable to cover up Ramesh's deficiency. When they came to know that there was a move to replace him, they and the other operatives were greatly perturbed, feeling that it might happen to any of them. The general feeling was that it was unfair to replace an old employee when he had given the best years of his life to the organisation, especially when viewed against the liberal tradition of the organisation. If the working group had been larger, management might not even have been able to detect the deficiency of an individual operative, much less penalise him. There were supervisors in the organisation who were not totally physically fit for their jobs, but management had taken a sympathetic attitude in their case. The recognised workers' union was also in sympathy with Mr. Ramesh and knew that the workmen, as a whole, were against his replacement. The matter therefore came up for consideration at a meeting of senior executives presided over by the General Manager. The General Manager expressed the view that replacement of Mr. Ramesh by a younger, trained operative might not be the best way of handling the situation. It would create a precedent, and make it difficult for management to turn down similar requests from other departmental managers, when older employees could not contribute fully towards achieving optimum production. The union would also not agree to such a proposal. He pointed out that about a third of the employees of the company were over 50 years old and it would be next to impossible to implement such a replacement policy, when the normal retiring age of employees was 60. The Personnel Officer, who was present, expressed difficulty in rehabilitating old operatives rendered surplus, in other departments on lighter jobs, especially when such placements would block the promotional opportunities of men down the line in those departments. Operatives with specialised skills might not be able to adjust themselves to new jobs or develop new skills at an advanced age. In the discussion that followed everyone was of the view that the problem posed by Ramesh's ineffectiveness was serious enough to warrant the formulation of a definite policy to deal with this and similar situations that might arise. The question was, how to evolve a reasonable policy that would satisfy all the principal interests concerned.

Questions :

- 1. Describe the main problem involved in the case.**
- 2. How should the problem be tackled and why ?**

Details

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