



Eliminating Irritation by Aaron Crowley

When was the last time you were frustrated by something in your business? Last night? This morning? Five minutes ago? If you own a stone business, you probably deal with the regular irritation of re-occurring issues. Maybe the issue that occurred five minutes ago, was that an under mount sink piece broke because it didn't have rods. The infuriating thing about it is that it has happened three times in the last two months. And despite the fact that three workers in the shop are capable of cutting, preparing, and gluing rods in an under mount sink piece, somehow this step was still missed. You are asking yourself the question, "How can my employees neglect something so fundamental to fabricating...over and over again?" Maybe you're asking yourself if running this business is really worth all the frustration.

Question: Is it possible to run a stone shop with out cynically believing that ALL problems are the result of lazy employees?

The answer is yes, but the owner must first resist the temptation to blame employees for the problems and then get proactive in resolving them.

By adopting this perspective and taking the following steps, the irritating issues that drive many shop owners up the wall can be drastically reduced.

Step One: Clearly state who is responsible for what task and when that task is to be completed. It is shocking how many employees don't really know what they are truly expected to do. It's only fair to let them know. Example: The sawyer is responsibly for cutting, prepping, and gluing steel rods into the sink piece before pieces are machined or fabricated. As opposed to, "everyone knows this has to be done, so someone should just do it."

Step Two: Document who is responsible for performing the task. Talk is cheap and it's easily forgotten, especially when things get busy. So get it down on paper. Example: Write a procedure for the sawyer that clearly states how and when he is to rod the sink piece.

Step Three: Explain the reasoning behind, and consequence of, not performing the tasks as they are written. Explaining the logic behind a decision will usually decrease the need for the consequence. Example: If the sink piece is not rodDED prior to machining or fabrication the piece might break, thereby jeopardizing the sawyer's job.

Step Four: Get a verbal and written agreement from the responsible party. It is crucial that the individual understands and agrees to perform the tasks as they are written. Example: Discuss the new responsibility with the sawyer, ask for his verbal agreement to execute it then have him sign a written document that goes into his file as a record.

Your issue may not be rodding under mount sink pieces, it might be contractors not having under mount sinks onsite for the template. Regardless of what or how many issues exist, these four steps will work to reduce them. Remember, the purpose of assigning responsibility isn't to assign blame when an issue occurs, it is to reduce the frequency of the occurrence. Fewer issues equals less frustration and that equals more joy, fun, and satisfaction in running a business. And that's something every stone shop owner should strive for and achieve.

