

Lunch in a bar

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By James Collins

Kollsman instruments company had a major facility in Elmhurst, New York City consisting of four different buildings and a couple of thousand employees. I was an engineer working for the firm and noticed that there was an increase in quality rejects in the afternoon and brought it to the attention of one of the supervisors.

I asked him, "Is there anything we can do about this?"

"Have you ever been to the local bar at lunchtime?"

"No I sometimes eat in the cafeteria but usually I bring my own lunch any time I can because of the workload."

"Why don't you meet me 15 minutes before the whistle blows at the bar down the corner. You'll find it very interesting."

The next day I showed up at the bar and met Peter, the supervisor, at the door of the facility at about 11:45 AM. Peter said, "Let's go inside, grab a hamburger, and sit in the booth and I'll tell you what to look for." We went in and ordered our hamburgers and he said take a look at the bar."

I went over the bar and watched the bartender going down the line filling a number of glasses all on the bar. There were no customers. The bar was empty. However, there were six stools and in front of each stool there was a different set of glasses. One would have three shot glasses and a beer mug full of beer. The next would have two shot glasses, a hamburger and a beer mug full of beer. The next had a cluster of three or four shot glasses. Next was a line of five filled shot glasses. While the last one displayed three full shot glasses and another full beer mug.

I asked Peter, "Well what has this got to do it?"

He said, "Just wait and watch."

Just about this time the lunch whistle blew for a group covering about 500 people. As a group they all reacted as one. It took about a minute to two and you could hear crowds, loud voices, and running feet coming down the sidewalk. The door flew open and in came about eight different people. They all rushed into the bar and six of them went to the six stools, while the others went to a booth at the far end. The six sitting at the stools immediately started downing the drinks starting from the left and moving to the right. It was like six little machines in concert. One or two then stopped to eat their sandwiches or their hamburgers and then they finished all of the drinks in front of them. In 20 minutes they all got up and left. A few were staggering.

"Peter," I asked "How can they go back to work in that condition?"

"Well Jim now you understand why the quality falls off in the afternoon this has been going on for 20 years. It's a regular routine. The bartender knows each of these patrons by name and knows what they want to eat and how many drinks they expect. On payday they all come in and pay for what they are consumed during the week. They are expensive bills and we pay for that poor equality by rejects in the factory. That day I learned that many things are hidden under the guise of unions to prevent people from being, according to them, discriminated against. Rather than firing them for drinking, the

company figured it was easier to let them drink and take the rejects rather than have a major strike which of the entire facility down.

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