

# Big Company, Big Improvement, and Big Employee Involvement!

By Mike Touzeau

Even the largest and most successful corporations want to improve delivery performance, which is what motivated Chicago Metallic Corporation (CMC), a world leader in architectural building products, to get on board with the Velocity Scheduling System (VSS), a system for custom job shops which brings all production people together on a daily basis to meet those challenges as a team.

Old school thinking often keeps workers on the floor out of the loop, and the byproduct can be boredom, which leads to apathy, which leads to slow or no improvement in performance.

Workers are very accustomed to and probably too comfortable with taking four or five assignments to the floor for their shift, says CMC production manager Bob Tunney, so they don't like being pulled off one of those jobs once they started it. But that's exactly what's often necessary with VSS, since now everybody can readily see which jobs need to be attended to and which can be set aside for later.

## Busy = Chaos and Stress.

"Even on our worst days, our delivery was 88 percent (which is VERY good for a highly custom job shop)," Tunney said, but when they got busy it was chaotic and stressful for everybody. They knew they could increase that number, so their senior people searched for a better way to schedule.

They signed up to learn the Velocity Scheduling System process after their purchasing manager saw the opportunity online.

Tunney explained, "We went to VSS looking for improving our scheduling and visibility of orders through the shop. We wanted a way to improve work through our constraints."

"I envisioned this hi tech electronic scheduling board where everything would be automatic," he said, "but the Velocity Board is a manual board and I like the idea that everybody is touching it. Employees feel more comfortable with that. Some people don't like to touch technology."

## More Interaction & Collaboration.

The best part may be that they keep the user friendly manual Velocity Board inside the supervisor office area so workers freely roam in and out to collaborate with their bosses. Superstars and benchwarmers alike feel like they're part of a winning team. Everyone is interacting with the board and everyone is contributing and they can SEE those contributions.

"VSS gave us a discipline to follow -- follow the board. Previously we would have operators stay in their different machine areas no matter what the date on their order was. Now we will pull people from their areas and put them to the next order they have the skill to work on."

"Historically, we would have all this work going through one piece of equipment. When we were so busy we concentrated on the largest constraint, and we lost track of the other orders," Tunney explained.

"Looking back we realized that we could have fixed that if we'd had the Velocity Board to look at back then."

With delivery now closer to 98 percent, he said, the chaos and stress are greatly reduced.

"The people who controlled the process before did a good job, but this makes everybody's job easier."

## From 88 to 98% On-Time with LESS Chaos!

Change can bring on the paranoia about job security or just plain "this'll never work" concerns, especially in larger companies like CMCs. "We had some skepticism from key members of our Velocity Team," Tunney affirmed. "Our production control supervisor is not that big on change, and was skeptical at first".

And who could blame him? VSS requires a paradigm shift on your approach to scheduling. A paradigm shift is a "breaking away" from those core beliefs which limit how we see the world. It's usually a radically different way to think about something we wouldn't have considered previously. So it's perfectly normal to be cautious.

**To learn specifically what Bob T did to improve his shop, watch a 47 minute webinar on "How to Get More Jobs Done Faster" <http://www.velocityschedulingssystem.com>**

So they developed a plan for rolling it out to the floor and “we didn’t have pushback from the floor. We told them we need your help to make it work. And despite the fact that they preferred to do what they’re used to doing, they all stepped up.”

Another nice side effect of VSS is that it really helps with training and soliciting ideas from workers, he added, because things get discussed and decided together in daily five minute meetings in front of the board.

## Better, Increased Communication.

“When you have a big meeting,” Tunney said, “you know a guy isn’t going to feel comfortable raising his hand. But this really increases communication with the supervisors to identify problems—what do I work on?—and then you get feedback right away.”

“VSS also improved our communication not only to the shop in our 5 minute meetings on each shift, but also throughout the day when supervisors, operators, managers can look at the board and discuss what needs to be done and when.”

Tunney’s team was familiar with the “Theory of Constraints,” but said they didn’t really understand the process “until we went through it ourselves.”

This is a common thread with most Velocity Scheduling System clients. Many job shops and machine shops owners and their employees have read *The Goal* but they don’t know how to implement it in their shop.

The 14 week VSS Coaching Program takes you step-by-step how to do it in YOUR shop and the coaching ensures that you customize the system for you unique situation.

## Big Improvements!

CMC is meeting their scheduling goals. In addition to the improvement in on-time delivery, shipped dollars increased by 15% during the program.

The time it takes to get a job through the shop has gone from about 15 days down to about 5 days also during the 14 week program.

### CMC’s Velocity Team members’ comments:

- “A lot of cool stuff came out of it that I didn’t expect.”
- “I was against a manual board—but it really worked out well. It took less time and was smoother and easier.”
- “Communication with customer service and tech services increased.”
- “Good journey. 14 weeks went by quick.”
- “We had a lot of stuff in place. This helped us to formalize and get even better.”
- The whole team was asked – If you had VSS in place last year when you got slammed, would it have helped? – a resounding “YES” was the response.

But Tunney knows that continued success comes from continued learning and improving. So he’s especially happy, he said, with the POOGI (Process Of On-Going Improvement) part of the program, a feature that keeps leaders coming back for additional ways to get better.

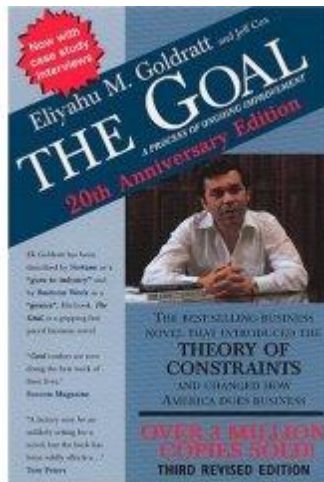
“Through the POOGI process we have started to look at what caused us to go into the red zone and we review this data monthly, looking for our biggest disruption to flow. Then we look for ways to eliminate or reduce those disruptions”, Tunney explained. “I really like that part of the program.”

## Continuous Improvement.

“I would tell anyone considering VSS to just trust the process,” Tunney said.

The improved teamwork at CMC has been a nice side effect of going through the program and it’s probably a pretty good competitive advantage.

From small shops to global giants like Chicago Metallic, VSS seems to be solving scheduling nightmares—and the bonus is bringing workers from top to bottom together to build a winning team.



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