

## CASE STUDY:

# Gold Producer Drives Efficiency, Consistency and Safety Through Leader Standard Work

## The Client

A mid-tier gold producer with an operating underground gold mine in eastern Europe.



## The Challenge

More and more in today's business world we face challenges in finding and retaining enough employees to adequately staff operations. This is nothing out of the ordinary for most businesses, and certainly this client was no different.

Among the many problems that today's environment poses, our client was facing:

### **Loss of veteran employees = brain drain.**

In this particular part of the world, underground miners are granted a retirement age of 45. As a result the average tenure of employees at the supervisor level is not as long as it is in many of our other client's operations. Due to the natural cycle of time, this client reached out to USC because they had just lost the majority of their supervisors due to retirement. The result was a loss of that experience, leadership skills, and management knowledge and a new crew of supervisors in need of being upskilled in these areas.

**Employee Shortages.** Beyond the loss of veteran employees for their supervisor staff, hiring and retaining employees in all functional areas is also a common problem of today that

this client was not immune to. With what feels to them like constantly being shorthanded, Supervisors are forced to scramble and make adjustments on the fly; in other words, spend their days firefighting.

**Communication suffering.** A symptom of constant firefighting is that some structures suffer. In this particular case it was the shift handovers. A three-shift operation means three supervisors and sharing of accurate information between the shifts can make the difference between success and failure.

For this client, the handover between the shifts was particularly difficult. The management underground was using the sides and back of the printed shift plan to write information they deemed important during the shift. The outgoing shift boss would then communicate shift status information via cellphone to the Mine captain at the end of the shift. Too often information was missed in the handovers, and we'd see excessive travel, rework, and lost time as a result.

In addition to the client's gaps to be overcome, we at USC had our own particular challenges to overcome on this effort.

**Language barriers.** We encounter many languages in our worldwide operations, but in this particular mine, very few people spoke English, and even fewer of the front-line workers did. We utilized every tool at our disposal, translators, phone apps, and learning the local language as we went to overcome this hurdle. Towards the end of the project the company lost three of the four translators to outside contracting. This caused the team to rely heavily on our learned native language and apps.

**Cultural barriers.** One of the main points of emphasis USC drives in our installations of Management Operating Systems is for the supervisors to “trust but verify” all work being done. Regular and adequate follow-up on assigned tasks is a key piece of ensuring schedule compliance and a high level of quality in work execution. Culturally for this client, it was seen as a level of mistrust for some if verification was asked for. We had to work with them to modify behaviors and instill a mindset that verification does not indicate distrust, rather, closing the loop on a job well done.

## The Solution

**Leader Standard Work.** A strength of USC’s offerings is what we call the Leader Standard Work package. We embed with clients at the supervisory level to develop and standardize all the tools and training materials necessary to bring a new supervisor up to speed with the critical responsibilities of their role quickly.

This process involves developing schedule controls, outlines of the “ideal shift”, structured handover templates, training matrices, baseline safety checklists, and others to encompass a complete package to ensure all supervisors are working in the same ways.

**Education and training.** In parallel to the development of these tools, we also work with clients to build the education and training materials necessary to implement the Standard



Work packages with the supervisors. This includes detailed layouts of the processes, digital and hard copy documentation, as well as theoretical & practical training sessions with the supervisors.

## The Results

The ultimate goal of this project was a little different than our typical assignment. This client was hitting every production target when we came in. Ultimate success was determined by standardizing the work done shift over shift by each supervisor, quality being maintained or improved, and safety being maintained and improved.

By the end of the project, each department had their new and improved Standard Work packages and were utilizing them to full intent upon creation. Handovers between the shifts improved, follow-up and quality checks increased, and all supervisors involved saw an increase in their leadership skills from this process.

### The power of Leader Standard Work!

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