When it comes to paying maintenance crewmen and foremen, have you considered the piecework system—paying your employees by the job instead of by the hour? With piecework you pay your employees for getting the job done; it doesn’t matter how long it takes them.

**PROS OF PIECEWORK**

The one big pro is obvious: The employee begins to think like an owner. Under a piecework system, employees are less often found milling around the shop. They think twice before coming back for a broken bracket on a trimmer. Time is money. If a foreman does have to come back, he’ll make smart decisions, like leaving the other workers on the job. You’ll also find him amazingly anxious to vanish from your presence to get back on the job.

Routing will improve, too, as 7/11 stops suddenly will seem much less necessary and become less frequent. Your foreman now correlates maximizing his paycheck to maximizing your product or service. Upon arrival at the job site, he’s no longer inclined to wait for the song on the radio to end or finish the conversation regarding the latest subtleties of last night’s game scores. He wants to start cutting as soon as he parks the truck.

In addition, instead of three crew members waiting around for the last crew member to finish up, they are all finishing up at the same time.

Wasted minutes add up quickly. If one crew does 20 jobs in a day and wastes five minutes on each job, it’s 100 wasted minutes per crew member. For a two-man crew (200 minutes) that’s three hours and 20 minutes per day. Can you afford it?

**IMPLEMENTING PIECEWORK**

Any time a change is implemented by an employer, employees immediately assume it’s to make the owner’s pocket fatter and theirs thinner. To address this concern, consider introducing the piecework system gradually. At first, you may want to institute a substantial production-based bonus system (where approximately 10 percent to 20 percent of employees’ pay would be a result of production bonuses). Then, begin by paying $1 per man-hour produced in a week, after 50 hours has been produced. Employees will see the immediate benefits of the system.

Ask yourself why you can be so much more productive in the field than your workers. Are you not already on the piecework system? Put your foremen and crew members on the same system and you’ll find that your employees will not only work better, they’ll work smarter.

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