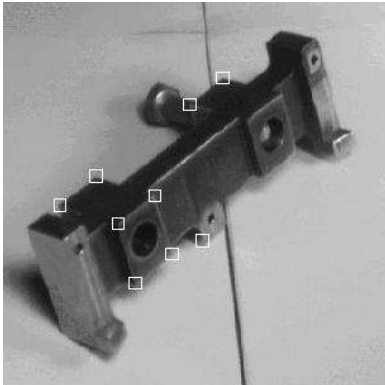


Shift Work and Biological Rhythms

Consolidated Widgets



A widget

Consolidated Widgets is a light industrial company situated in the Midlands. They make a variety of products destined for use in other processes, including widgets, oosits and thingamabobs. In order to satisfy the high demand for its products, Consolidated Widgets' main manufacturing plant operates a shift system to provide round-the-clock production. The company operates three shifts:

- 8am-4pm
- 4pm-midnight
- Midnight-8am

Workers stay on each shift for a week. Then they rotate to the earlier shift (i.e. those that were starting at midnight now start at 4pm and so on. Consolidated Widgets have introduced an additional payment of £3 per hour for workers on the 4pm and midnight shifts.

Unfortunately, since the introduction of the shift system two years ago, things have not been going well. Worker sickness and absenteeism have increased markedly. There has also been an increase in the number of accidents occurring involving workers operating the widget-making machinery. The quality control department has also noticed that the number of poorly manufactured thingamabobs has increased. There are more complaints from customers than previously, and an unacceptably high number of thingamabobs is being rejected at the end of the production line. In addition, worker morale and satisfaction are at an all time low. As a result, staff turnover has increased. People stay with the company for less time, and more money and time than previously are being spent on staff recruitment and training.



The Dudley Widget Works

Conglomerate Inc., who own Consolidated Widgets are worried about the company's poor performance. They are considering closing down the factory and outsourcing production of widgets, oosits and thingamabobs to Germany, which is known for the efficiency and high quality with which it manufactures these items.

In an attempt to turn the company around and avoid job losses, Consolidated Widgets have engaged an industrial psychologist to see if the problems can be put right. You are that psychologist.

You need to write a report identifying the problems with Consolidated Widgets' shift system. The quality of your report will determine the future of the Dudley Widget Works. If the management are convinced to implement the changes you suggest, and the changes work, then the workers can look forward to many more years of happy widget making.

What you need to do:

You must...	You should...	You could...
Explain the problems that night-shift workers experience.	Use evidence from psychological studies to back up the claims you make.	Explain the extent to which this research is directly relevant to the workers at Consolidated Widgets.
Explain how these problems are made worse by the shift system the company is operating.	Use evidence from psychological studies to back up the claims you make.	Explain the extent to which this research is directly relevant to the workers at Consolidated Widgets.
Suggest changes that the company could make to reduce their current problems.	Explain why the changes you suggest would work	Use relevant psychological evidence to back up your claims.
Explain the likely benefits these changes would have for the workers	Explain the benefits that increased worker well-being would have for the company.	