

Samples

Buddy McCormick, Original

Memorandum

From: Buddy McCormick

To: Jill Skelton, Supervisor

Re: Response to Your Request for a Progress Report

Over the past month, we have concentrated on designing molds for the new "Instant Styrofoam" product that is being developed by the Chemical Product Division. The work has been proceeding very slowly, and we have had several unsuccessful tests of various different molds. I hope that during the next month you can schedule us to work exclusively on this important problem. With another month's time I am sure we can come up with a good solution to the mold problem.

Discussion Questions

1. Is this an effective memo?
2. Does it accomplish what a memo or a progress report is supposed to do?

[Note: This scenario was suggested by a sample document in Paul V. Anderson, *Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach* (4th ed.), NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1998.]

Samples

Buddy McCormick, Revision 1

Memorandum

From: Buddy McCormick

To: Jill Skelton, Supervisor

Re: Response to Your Request for a Progress Report

Over the past month, we have concentrated on designing molds for the new "Instant Styrofoam" product that is being developed by the Chemical Product Division.

We started by looking for devices that we could use to clamp our standard mold shut once these new ingredients were poured into it and began to foam up. The only appropriate devices found to clamp the standard mold and hold it closed were C-clamps (12) around the edges. Obviously, this type of clamping required considerable time for opening and closing, but a variety of quick-action- type clamping devices (all designed to take the temperatures and pressures expected) proved unsatisfactory in earlier experiments. Whereas the clamps did hold the mold closed, this resulted in some secondary damage to the molds, specifically warping of the aluminum plates. This was due to the internally generated pressure during the foaming of the panels. The pressure was maximum about 10 minutes after placing the mold into the oven. This resulted in cleaning problems with the mold and produced an unusable part.

Having determined that the aluminum could not withstand the pressure without deflection, it was decided to build a steel mold housing 1.25 cm (1/2 inch) thick steel and to bolt it together. To reduce the time required to close the mold, the lid was split two-thirds and one-third, allowing two-thirds of the mold to be bolted shut prior to the adding of the foam ingredients. Once the foam ingredients were added, only about a dozen bolts needed to be inserted. Such a mold was fabricated and the first attempt at molding a part resulted in blowing the hinges off the end of the mold. Replacing the hinges and doubling up on the bolts with the hinges on, a second molding was made which actually caused a deflection of the 1.25 cm (1/2 inch) thick steel. Thus we have been unsuccessful in our efforts to design a mold that can accommodate the high pressure created during foaming by the higher density foams.

I recommend that during the next month you schedule us to work exclusively on this important problem.

Discussion Questions

1. Is this revision of Memo 1 an improvement?
2. How is it different from Memo 1?

Samples

Buddy McCormick, Revision 2

Memorandum

To: Jill Skelton, Supervisor, Chemical Products Division

From: Buddy McCormick, Research Technician, Chemical Products Division

Date: November 12, 1999

Re: Progress Report—Mold Design Project, Tests 1 and 2

CC: Robin Lakoff, Supervisor, Quality Control Overview

Over the past month, we have concentrated on designing molds for the new "Instant Styrofoam" product that is being developed by the Chemical Products Division. We have so far determined that (1) bolts work better than C-clamps as mold fasteners, (2) aluminum is not satisfactory as a material for the molds, and (3) one steel mold design that we tested will not work. We are currently trying to develop another steel mold design which will accommodate the high pressure "Instant Styrofoam" creates as it cures.

This memo will acquaint you with what we have accomplished to date and what we plan to do in order to complete the project.

Work Accomplished

Test 1: Clamping Aluminum Molds

We discovered that standard C-clamps are unsatisfactory, requiring considerable time for opening and closing. We switched to the quick-action-type clamping devices, which did hold the mold closed but which resulted in damage to the molds (the pressure of the foam warped the aluminum plates). Thus, we have eliminated aluminum as a possible material for the molds. (See Appendix A for test results).

Test 2: Bolting Steel Molds

A prototype mold fastened with bolts and made of 1.25 cm cold-rolled steel plate was constructed and, after one redesign, successfully tested. The first attempt at molding a part resulted in blowing the hinges off the end of the mold. We replaced the hinges and doubled up on the bolts in making a second mold. However, curing pressure caused the plates to deflect 1.25 cm—an unacceptable deviation.

Work Remaining

Test 3: Steel Mold Design

We would like to continue testing steel molds, to determine whether thicker steel or welded brackets will best stiffen the mold to reduce deflection to within tolerances. We then need to modify the prototype and conduct tests to verify the new design.

Recommendation

Our team will complete Test #3 within two weeks if you can schedule us to work on it exclusively.

Discussion Questions

1. This memo is an obvious improvement over Memos 1 and 2. But what features make it better?
2. What has Buddy done (finally) to make this memo professional?
3. How is the tone different from Memo 2?
4. Will Buddy keep his job?

Note: All three samples are taken from Sullivan, Porter, & Johnson-Eilola's *Professional Writing Online 2.0* published by Allyn & Bacon/Longman.