

Don't play games with your schedules

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Playing it straight with suppliers earns firm prices and other cost-reduction assistance

BROOKLYN, N.Y. - Avoiding "credibility gaps" - especially in scheduling - is one of the best ways to enlist suppliers' help in inflation fighting. The help can range from guaranteed prices to value analysis assistance, stresses Mike Garafano, director of purchases for Tudor Games, Inc.

Garafano's blanket orders, placed in January of each year, are almost all on a firm basis. The Savings from such orders

(estimated at \$100,00 for 1978) are supplemented by VA efficiencies in materials, processes, and packaging - with vendors making hefty contributions in all three.

Blanket orders for steel, says Garafano, are the only ones where price at time of shipment applies. January prices stay firm throughout the year on other major commodities: plastic resins, rubber, paper, textiles, electrical

items, etc. In return, Garafano doesn't play fast and loose with shipping schedules in January, they know those schedules will be honored by Tudor Games.

Vagueness is out. As Garafano puts it: "You can't just say to a supplier that you are going to give him a million dollars worth of

'You can't tell a Vendor you're going to give him a million dollars in business - but not when.'

business, but then can't tell him when you'll need it." In practical terms, this may mean taking in 100,000 pounds of material even when it's not yet required.

"We're the ones who have to be versatile, not the supplier," he says. Such versatility can be tricky in the seasonal games business, which peaks in the fall before Christmas. But Tudor Games has an edge here, because two of its 12 production lines are set up just to handle changes in shop schedules.

The shop schedule changes are needed from time to time (more often late in the year) to accommodate the needs of



New packaging for football game, says Tudor Games' Mike Garafano, is typical of the way that suppliers have helped the firm win reduced costs and improved quality.

customers; stores, retail chains, and Tudor Games own direct mail operation. The company's success in taking care of its customers is recognized. Five times in the last 10 years (including 1977), Sears Roebuck has named the company its number-one games supplier.

Another distinction: Tudor Games specializes in games keyed to sports, and its electric football games are the only ones authorized by the National Football League. The authenticity that the NFL demands, to continue its endorsement, is stiff. Colors and designs on the player-figures' uniforms, for example, must be exact, and the ratio between white and black players on each team must meet NFL specs.

Since there are 28 teams in the NFL, each with a "home" and "away" jersey, that's 56 uniform styles that Tudor Games must keep up on. With sales of about 2 million football games yearly, and 22 players per game, the company produces 44 million figures. The uniform on each one must be hand painted. So far automated processes haven't proved feasible for this operation. But Garafano and executives in production, sales, engineering and design are always on the lookout for ideas that will trim costs and improve quality.

Hold monthly meetings. "We meet once a month to reevaluate everything we've discussed at previous sessions," says Garafano, noting that purchasing and its suppliers can often

confirm or deny the feasibility of a particular idea new approach.

One recent change involved packaging. Tudor was using a white corrugated carton, printed flexographically (rubber plates), and bearing a small label in addition to the carton printing. The Garafano happened to see another type of packaging in a department store and figured it might be adaptable to his firm's football games.

Under the new setup, which has been adopted for 90% of the company's line, the game is packaged in a standard brown corrugated container. But a big "label" - a sheet of 90-lb coated one side litho stock - is supplied by carton suppliers. Attractively printed, it covers face, ends, and sides of the cartons.

The new packaging method costs about 25% less than the former one, reports Garafano. **(.....this portion non-legible.....)** around \$450 a ton for bleached white board. A label of some size had to be applied anyway. Equally important, the quality of the carton has been improved, since the printing on its visible sides is a four-color process.

There were however problems that had to be ironed out in developing the new concept. Liaison between purchasing and engineering became critical. For example, engineers had to assist in the design of the equipment for affixing the label sheets to carton blanks. Registration was tricky, because the printing on the sheets had to line upon carton after the

container was formed.

Another value improvement centered in the figures themselves. At one time, they were blow-molded. But now they are injection molded of high impact polystyrene. The new process is not only less expensive but gives better definition to the arms and legs of the players.

Avoid 'stretch-runs'. A VA project on another Tudor Product involved plastic rails that separate the entries on a horse racing game. Made of pvc, the strips tend to stretch. That made it difficult for assembly workers to fit the strips locking projections into holes pre-punched in the games steel base. As a result of a supplier's suggestion the strips are now made of high-density polyethylene. They cost about a third less and have eased assembly operations as well.

"There's no room for complacency in this business," Garafano declares. The company's games, he says, are designed in the \$20 - 50 range. The owners of the privately-held firm want to maintain that market. Keeping cost down and quality up in an inflationary period is a big challenge, Garafano continues, and he enjoys "being on the team" that faces that challenge.

At Tudor Games, the record shows how motivating suppliers - by giving them accurate data for their own planning - can pay off. The company's sales up 25% in 1977, are a full third ahead of last year. ■

From a Facebook post shared on The National ELECTRIC FOOTBALL Game Museum 10/14/2026 by Glenn Garafano. "It was so much fun as a teen watching these games come alive at the factory off the assembly line. He was buying from U.S. Steel, Tudor Games had something in Haiti to cut labor, I had every game they made. I think their office was on the 5th or 6th floor on Johnson St, In Brooklyn.