

Working Alone:

Management's Plan for Changing our Work Processes is Poisoning the Seedbeds of Solidarity



Charley Richardson
UMass Lowell Labor Extension Program
Charles_Richardson@uml.edu

Where does Solidarity Come From?

- Social interaction in the workplace builds connections.
- Common experience both positive and negative (oppression and creation) builds sense of collective.
- Social interaction also provides opportunity to create and enforce norms of behavior.



Key Changes in the Work Process that Impact Informal Interaction

- Downsizing of workplaces through automation, speed-up and distributed production.
- Restructuring /Intensification/Standardization of work.
- Job combination
- Increased monitoring
- Digitalization
- Changing schedules
- Contracting out/Use of contractors/Use of temps
- Reduction and Elimination of networking jobs



Smaller Workplaces

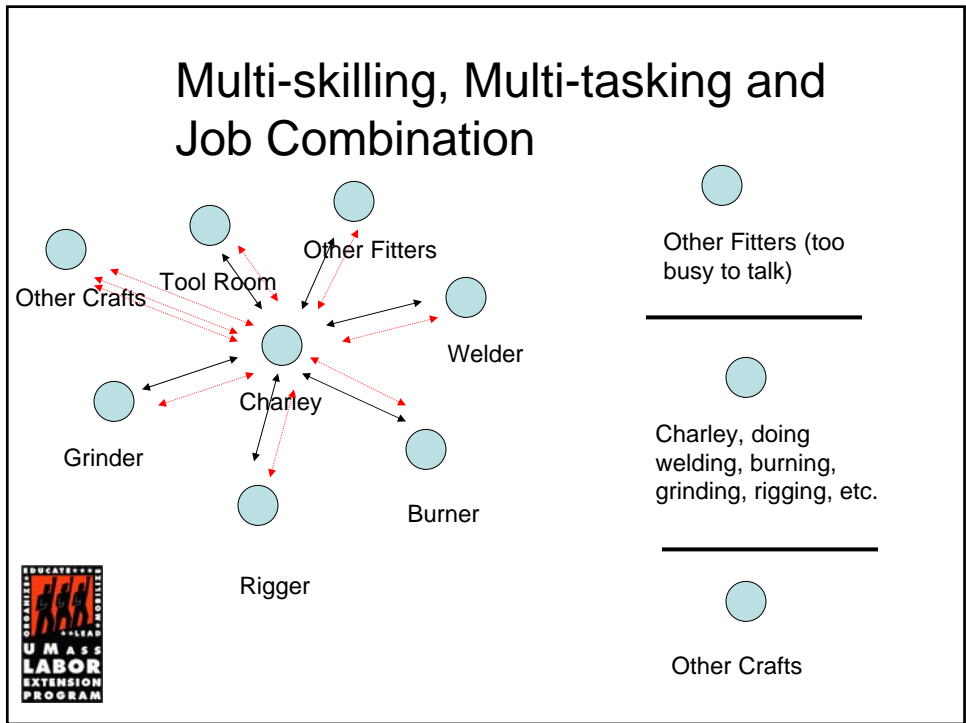
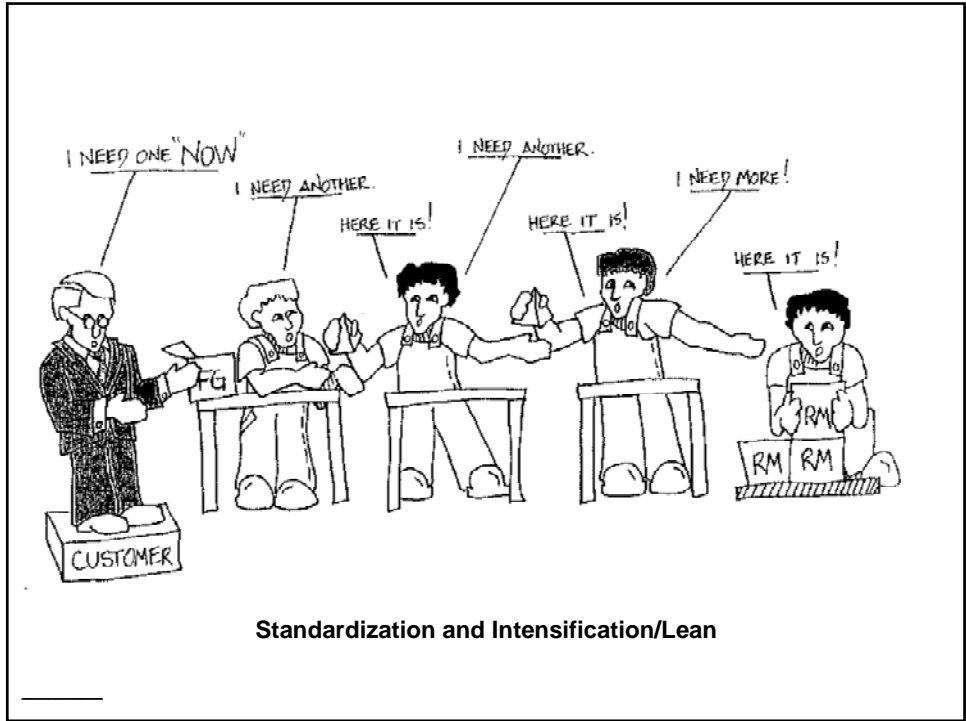
Then

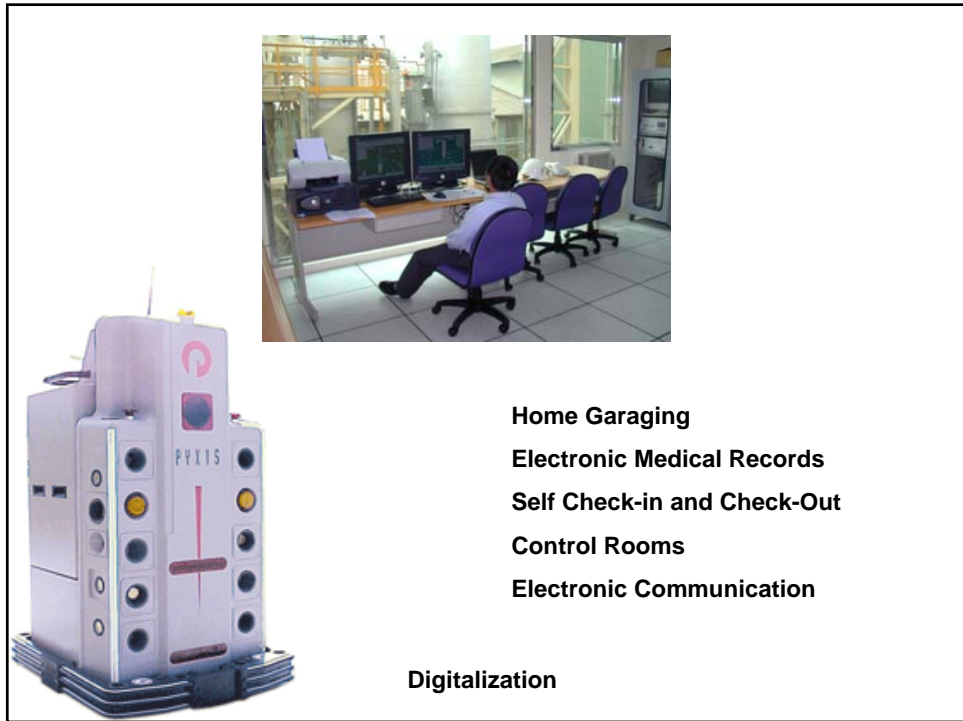
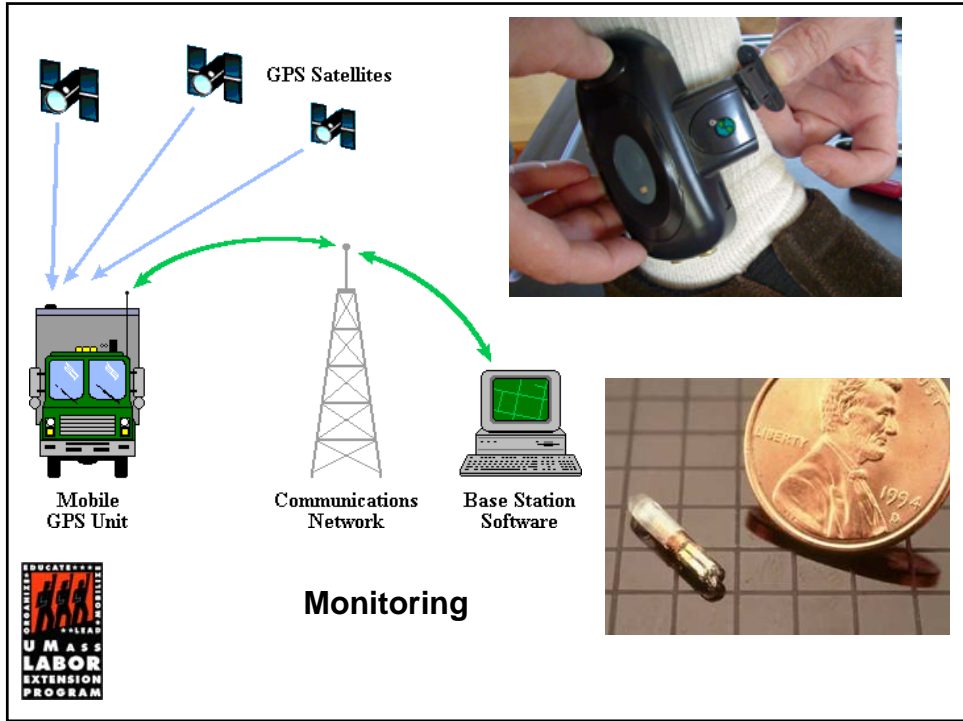
- Ford River Rouge Plant – 100,000 Workers
- Steel Mills – 15-35,000 Workers

Now

- All of Ford Motor Company – 54,000 UAW Members
- Steel Mills – 3-5,000 Workers







Changing Schedules

- 12 Hour Shifts
- Forced, unscheduled overtime
- Split Shifts



Work that has been:

- Standardized
- Analyzed
- Automated
- Simplified

**Is work that is easier to
Contract Out, Outsource and
Move**



The 87,000 square-foot structure's facade was assembled entirely from concrete panels cast in Mexico. That's right, a construction site where much of the construction was done offshore... Instead of pouring concrete forms on site, Mr. Fastag's firm cast more than 2,000 individual panels at its plant in the Mexico City suburb of Atizapan de Zaragoza, then shipped them 2,350 miles north. Carried on mammoth flatbed trucks -- a total of 140 truckloads for the Salt Lake City library -- each panel was delivered in the order of its assembly. --- Wall Street Journal



In Construction

Miles away, 'I'll have a burger.

When Jairo Moncada pulled up to the drive-through at Wendy's in Burbank, Calif... The woman taking his lunch order was sitting 3,000 miles away at a computer terminal in Nashua (New Hampshire), and fielding calls from Wendy's customers at drive-throughs as far away as Florida and Washington, D.C.

Jenn Abelson, The Boston Globe
November 5, 2006



In Fast Food

- *Detroit Medical Center Introduces Robotic Doctors;*
- *Pentagon Seeks To Develop 'Trauma Pod' for Battlefield Surgery;*
- *Georgia Launches Telemedicine Network;*
- *Idaho Hospital to Launch Telepharmacy Program;*
- *Remote Monitoring Helps Counter Shortage of ICU Specialists*
- *California County to Install Drug-Dispensing Robots in Jails;*



In Health Care

Networking Jobs at Risk

- Tool Room
- Expediter
- Mail Delivery
- Copy Center



If we challenge
management's plan,
they say:

Management Rights



**“Hey, management
is lighting their
arrows!...
Can they DO that?”**

The fightback against Working Alone needs to take place every day in our workplaces as management introduces new technologies and restructures our work.



What to do?

- Acknowledge Problem – Look at threats to solidarity in the work process
- Evaluate all changes in technology, work organization and policy with impact on social interaction and solidarity in mind
- Bargain over all changes in the work process
- Create Union programs for building interaction and building solidarity
- Build an ideological defense of community/solidarity against the attacks of individualism

