THE CULTURAL NEWSLETTER FOR WABTEC EMPLOYEES

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Special Edition:
Propulsion Platform

July 2025

Wabtec CORPORATION

LEADER LETTER

Introducing the Propulsion Platform

Mike Bratt introduces the Propulsion Special Edition, with articles covering the ways Propulsion sites support global efforts, how the platform is elevating performance with the new structure, and more.

It's hard to believe the first half of the year is already over, but with that brings my full transition into leading our Propulsion Platform. This edition of *Same Track* is all about that platform — sharing what products and services we're responsible for, where we fit in the overall Freight Operations puzzle, and how we're raising our performance to the next level.

Before we dive in with Propulsion, though, I want to take some time and thank the teams in GEMC, TXO Mining, and TXL Locomotive. It has truly been an honor working with you over the last 2 to 7 years (depending on the respective site). Continue to drive for continuous improvement in all aspects of what you do.

I've spent some time traveling to our North American Propulsion plants, meeting our teams, and seeing our operations at work. It's going to be fun learning how we can leverage the full breadth of this supply chain to serve our customers.

It was a tough winter from an availability standpoint, but we're now positioned well in July from a safety stock level on the Service side. So let's stay vigilant on Quality— our customers are relying on it!

As we look forward, it's really about evaluating what is working well. We're all asking ourselves what the opportunities to improve are — whether it be people, product, or process. There is strength in numbers, and we plan to leverage that strength in solving our toughest challenges.

Thanks for all you do and stay safe,

Mike Bratt
Propulsion Platform Leader

FRONTLINE SPOTLIGHT

Joining the Global Team

Gabriel Rodriguez and Angel Martínez Lozano discuss how the Apodaca site is supporting the Simandou project.

Gabriel Rodriguez

Quality Engineer

Angel Martínez Lozano

Quality Manager

Since the announcement of the Simandou order, the first order for a new customer for the Marhowra site outside of Indian Railways, we've primarily focused on what this means for Marhowra and how that site is preparing. However, with the addition of the Propulsion platform to Freight Operations, we're showing some of the ways this project is truly a One Wabtec operation.

Here, Gabriel Rodriguez, Quality Engineer in Apodaca, and his manager, Angel Martínez Lozano, share how the team is contributing to this exciting new project.

On a global scale

The Propulsion team in Apodaca is excited to contribute to the Simandou project with its combo builds, but they know the opportunity goes beyond that. "Our team is fully committed to ensuring the highest standards of quality. We bring our combos, and we also bring a culture of collaboration and continous improvement," Angel says. "Every member of the team understands the impact of the program and is motivated to be part of the international program."

But this new opportunity also brings more responsibility, since it brings a whole new workflow and rigorous quality standards. "One of the main challenges in the Simandou project is focusing on quality and maintaining consistency," Gabriel says. "Ensuring that every single deliverable meets the same high standards can be difficult when multiple teams are involved."

Building consistency

To ensure each team is meeting expectations, they've established strong guidelines. "We have clear documentation of standards and procedures, regular training for team members, and frequent reviews to quickly react to any deviation," Gabriel explains. "We've also established key performance indicators (KPIs), quality benchmarks, and testing criteria from the outset to guide efforts and measure our success. It is essential to maintain traceability of changes and their impact on quality"

Angel believes that the consistent communication and alignment between groups like Engineering, Manufacturing Operations, Supply Chain, and Quality has been crucial. He says, "By fostering a culture of ownership and accountability, everyone has taken responsibility for ensuring our success."

Stepping up

Through all this, Angel has been impressed with the ways Gabriel has demonstrated his leadership abilities. "Gabriel played a key role in bringing the best out of the team by leading with a proactive mindset and promoting the kind of open communication we need," he says.

Angel continues: "It'd be great for other employees to model his strong sense of responsibility, attention to detail, and ability to remain calm under pressure. All of this, plus his approachability, has built trust within his team and created a great work environment."

> "Ensuring that every single deliverable meets the same high standards can be difficult when multiple teams are involved."
>
> — Gabriel Rodriguez

COMPETITIVE EDGE

Charging Up

Mike Sandoval shares how the Propulsion platform is amping up its collaboration to drive better efficiency, quality, and reliability across all its sites.

Mike
Sandoval

Director
Quality Manufacturing

By creating platforms within the new Freight Operations organization, we're hoping to raise the bar on everything we deliver to our customers. For Propulsion, the biggest focus is standardization across all our products and all our sites. Here, Mike Sandoval, Director, Quality Manufacturing, shares how sites across Propulsion are working together to deliver one impeccable standard of quality and reliability.

The Propulsion platform

Mike started his career with Wabtec in Propulsion on the Life Cycle Cost team in Kansas City, then took on several different project management and quality roles, making him a great person to elevate the platform in this way. In 2024, he moved back to Propulsion to focus on both quality and reliability, working on driving down defects and inefficiencies to improve our products' performance for our customers.

But what products does Propulsion refer to in the first place? Mike explains: "Propulsion covers the system that's required to move the locomotive, with the exception for the engine and control system. The engine charges the alternator, making the alternator the first system within the propulsion realm, and then the alternator charges various fans and cooling equipment, and ultimately provides power for the traction motors, which rotate the wheels underneath the locomotive."

> "It's not just short-term performance and making sure that there are no manufacturing issues, but looking long term for opportunities within the actual design of the product."

Thinking big picture

With the recent Freight Operations reorganization, and the creation of the Propulsion platform, Mike believes there's a big opportunity to drive better consistency for customers.

"In the prior organization, new manufacturing was in Freight Equipment, and all remanufacturing was in Freight Services. So there was a big difference between production of new product, especially for traction motors, versus rebuilding that same product over the rest of its life cycle," he says. "Now it's an all-encompassing, cradle-to-grave freight type of scenario where you own the product from the time it's born until the time it dies."

With a more holistic view of the product life cycle, Mike's team is looking for ways to extend each product's useful life and reduce maintenance or replacement needs. "Since my team is focused on both quality and reliability, we're responsible for that overall performance. It's not just short-term performance and making sure that there are no manufacturing issues, but looking long term for opportunities within the actual design of the product."

Comprehensive evaluation

But seeking to improve products in virtually every aspect isn't easy. So Mike and his team make it a collaborative, team effort to understand the potential weak points, and what solutions they can create. "We do biweekly reviews across our products, looking at why things are failing and why things are being removed from locomotives. Then we do a cross-functional review with Services to find out what kinds of repairs are being done with the fleets in the field," he says. "We then discuss with Engineering, Manufacturing, and then within our own quality organization about what's failing and what kinds of actions we could take."

Another focus for Propulsion's Quality and Reliability teams is standardization. Mike says: "We produce similar products at multiple facilities, and we've naturally drifted in our standard processes over the years. One shop might find an issue and fix it, but they don't always communicate that to other sites doing similar work, so we've ended up with sometimes very different processes across manufacturing facilities building very similar products."

A universal standard

The drift over time can lead to differences that ultimately impact our customers. “For example, one of our customers believes they get a different performance out of their traction motors from one shop versus another shop, due to process differences,” Mike says. “So we’ve been working between our sites to help standardize and drive alignment between those processes to ultimately repair our customers’ perception of those sites. We want them to be happy because they have a Wabtec product, not a Site A or Site B product.”

Of course, we also don’t want to wait on our customers to let us know when they see a disparity between sites. Mike explains: “To address any differences, one of the things our team has been tasked with this year is auditing all our SOPs that are performed at multiple sites so we can make sure we’re driving standardization both to the engineering requirements and across our sites’ manufacturing practices. We want to produce a single Wabtec product across the board.”

Taking charge

Mike knows that the biggest responsibility for increasing standardization lies with operators on the floor. “A lot of our sites have operated in silos in the past — the sooner we can get on board with how we make our products between the different facilities, the sooner we can drive improvements for everyone,” he says. “Once we have consistency, then we can find our inefficiencies and sources of quality defects, and fix them for everybody.”

So he has a call to action to employees across Propulsion, and across Freight Operations. “I’m asking our operators to proactively look for ways to standardize. Ask questions about how other sites do the same work, or what tools they’re using, or how they know things are up to standard,” he says. “It’s good to be curious and ask questions and think about more than what’s going on within our four walls. That’s how we’ll drive meaningful change.”

Addressing New Challenges

Managers across different Propulsion sites share what makes their platform unique and how they collaborate to deliver the best products for the customer.

Jacobo Magana

Senior Director, KCR Plant Management
Kansas City, US

Ignacio Espinoza

Plant Manager
Apodaca, Mexico

Tyler Rettger

Senior Plant Manager
Emporium, US

What does your Propulsion site work on?

Jacobo: In Kansas City, our main focus is remanufacturing combos for locomotives. Combos are the assembly of traction motors with the wheel sets of the locomotive.

Ignacio: We do lots of propulsion equipment parts, including traction motors, combo units, and blowers, and we do both remanufacturing and new units. We serve our main operations sites in Fort Worth and Erie, but we also provide things for our service shops and international customers.

Tyler: There's a variety of products we work on here, from coils to armatures, grid blowers, alternate air blowers, exhaust blowers, traction motor blowers, air-to-air fans, and radiator fans. Essentially, everything that comes through our door is no longer working the way it did in its original state, and we're bringing it back to life.

The Emporium reman site is smaller than many of the other sites, and because of that, we often wear a lot of different hats. I think that gives us a nice edge because we have a lot of flexibility and cross-functionality within our team. Our workforce is very hardworking, loyal, and comes to work every day with everyone looking to give their best.

What are some of Propulsion's unique challenges?

Jacobo: The product we work on is very dynamic, and the UX business in general is challenging, because we're receiving dirty combo cores from the customer, which we need to tear down, inspect, repair, and put back together. So our starting point is different every time, but we need to meet the high quality standards and exceed customer expectations.

Ignacio: While there are challenges, we feel like we also have a lot of opportunities because we work with both new and reman. Because we work in both, we can take advantage of the volume if there's a dip in demand for one and not the other. We have so much knowledge of the product from reman, and that gives us a nice advantage.

Tyler: Probably the biggest challenge for us is the core condition when they arrive to our site for reman. Some are simple, but some require heavy repairs and nearly full rebuilds. Several different factors, including the severity of the conditions throughout the winter, impact the extent of our repairs. It's a challenge daily, and we're constantly looking at our fallout rates and having to adjust our plans, adjust what we're bringing into the shop from new material just based on the constant change in core conditions.

What does collaboration look like for your team?

Jacobo: We really emphasize communication between different departments. Specifically, between us and Engineering, Quality, EHS, Finance, and the Service teams. It's important for us to work very closely together to reach the right level of standardization and to meet customer expectations.

Ignacio: We collaborate with different teams, like Engineering and Design, every step of the way. For example, we introduced a new blower line here last year, and we talked with the Design team all the time to try to understand what the possible points of failure were, since that was the main challenge we were facing.

Tyler: One of the really nice things that's stood out from my time at Wabtec has been the cross-functionality and the communication between sites. We all keep in touch and work together to achieve our greater goal, which is ultimately to supply our customers with the best product we can while keeping our employees safe and healthy.

What's your favorite part of working in Propulsion and Motors?

Jacobo: You know, I started working in Propulsion 25 years ago in the traction motor facility as an OMLP, and ever since then, I've loved this product because of the complexity of remanufacturing. Every single day is a different challenge you need to face.

Ignacio: It's nice to know we contribute such a key component of the locomotive, and to know that we're part of a successful project and a successful company. I also enjoy that, because of our experience, we get to be involved with the development and launch of new products, working alongside engineering. That's a huge opportunity for us and a fun part of the job.

Tyler: Definitely the unique day-to-day challenges. You have to constantly be on your toes, thinking strategically about the best way to solve whatever new problem shows up. But on top of that, you're not alone — there's always someone to help, lend a hand, and share their experience.

Check out the Managers' Roundtable video on the digital version of *Same Track*.

Apodaca, Mexico

EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE

Reducing Reworks

Brandon Hill

Site Quality Leader

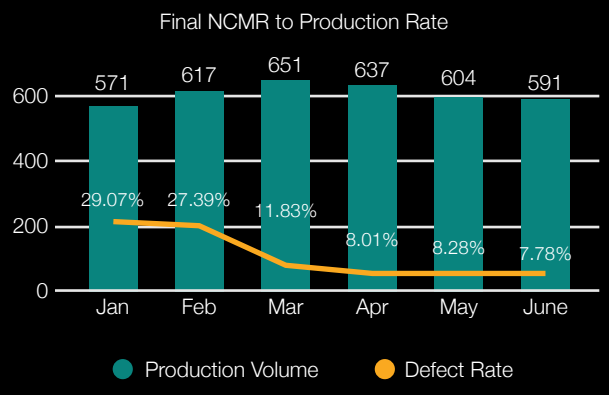
Recently, the Kansas City site had been dealing with a high defect rate from their production line. These defects often resulted in reworks, shipping delays, or further bottlenecks across the site. Here, Brandon Hill, Site Quality Leader, shares how they improved their processes, start to finish, to reduce the rate of defects by over 70%.

THE PROBLEM

"We found that approximately 30% of finished goods combos had some level of defect written up by inspectors. These ranged from relatively minor documentation errors to heavy defects, resulting in costly reworks within the plant and delayed shipments to the customer."

RESULTS

"The new Line Inspector increased overall efficiency and reduced defects found in FGI to just 8%. Finding defects in the line also allowed us to improve operator feedback as soon as the defects were detected. Previously, it might have taken a few days to determine the source once a combo hit final inspection."



THE APPROACH

"We started by improving visibility to the defects found through automated reporting systems. We then transitioned one quality control tech, Donald Bryant, from Finished Goods and reassigned him as a Line Inspector with the goal of identifying defects earlier in the process.

"A lot of people contributed to improvements, but Donald really made this possible by attacking the assignment with enthusiasm and dedication, proving the role would make a real difference. I also want to highlight Bryce Litzenberg, who was my LEAD working his quality rotation at KCR."

Continuous improvement

"Our next step is adding a similar inspector on the second shift. This could consistently reduce defects even further. After that, over the course of a year, we would take what we have learned from the process and help teach individual line leaders how to spot and address these defects, further improving the quality culture at KCR."