



Built-For-Purpose Means Built-To-Last

Growing up as a kid, I used to marvel at my Dad's workshop, especially this one piece of equipment. It was the Swiss Army knife of woodworking equipment. This thing was a table saw that could be converted to a lathe, then stood up and turned into a drill press. It was amazing! Who wouldn't want this magnificent piece of engineering!

Funny thing though, as the years went by and more and more equipment showed up in my Dad's shop, I noticed the magical morphing machine got used less and less. You see, over the years my Dad bought a table saw, then a lathe, and then a drill press. It turns out the table saw that was built to be a table saw, was a better table saw than the magical morphing machine. The same was true for the new lathe and the new drill press. Now, the machine that might on some level resemble a Transformer[®] Robot when in action, sits in the corner of my Dad's shop, covered, untouched for more than a decade.

It turns out that nothing beats a tool that was designed for the task at hand. A multi-purpose tool is never going to do as good a job on a specific task as a tool designed **FOR** that task. For that matter, using ANY tool that wasn't specifically designed for a specific task will always produce inferior results. Can you drive in a screw with a butter knife? Sure, but why would you want to if you didn't have to?

We don't have to limit this discussion to woodshop tools. The same can be applied to "tools" used in retail stores, in warehouses, and in manufacturing plants. They might be tools of technology such as

smart phones or tablets, or handheld computers or kiosks. In some cases, technology devices such as these are "misused" and get deployed for the wrong task for a couple of reasons:



► *The device is designed to be multipurpose so that has to be a good thing right? Even though you might not even use all of the functionality of the device, it's good to have it just in case, right?*

Wrong. Let's say you just bought a handheld computer to use for scanning your inventory. All you need to do is scan, enter a quantity and send that data back to the server. But your handheld computer has everything but the kitchen sink. It has a camera, and a Bluetooth radio, and who knows what else. Features that you won't ever use, but that you paid for, might make the device more expensive, heavier, and probably more complicated to configure and use. These devices are made to be "all things to all people". Instead of building a device that is built specifically for that purpose of scanning your inventory, leaving

out the bells and the whistles and the cost, the "multi-purpose" device is loaded with additional features to justify the higher price.

► *The device is designed as a consumer grade device, but if you plug enough accessories into it, or slip it into some sort of holder or "sled" that adds some additional functionality, then that's just as good as a built-for-purpose device, right?*

Wrong again. First, a consumer grade device in any kind of holder or sled will still never be as durable as the built-for-purpose device and it will never be as ergonomic as the built-for-purpose device which is designed for durability and takes into consideration the demanding requirements of all-day use.



But, importantly, consumer devices evolve and change at a ridiculous rate. Manufacturers of consumer grade devices care only about the consumer market. Commercial applications represent only a small fraction of their sales so commercial or industrial customers won't influence product road maps or design changes. Models of consumer grade devices will change frequently, and often times those changes will have an economic impact on the commercial user. Connectors will change

making existing accessories obsolete. Housings get thicker or thinner and now sleds or holsters won't work. Changes in the operating system might require changes in user software. Product models will be discontinued frequently and with little or no notice.

Commercial and industrial users of consumer grade devices will constantly be reacting to swift and frequent changes in consumer grade devices, and the overall durability simply can't compare to built-for-purpose devices, which are intended for challenging environments and are kept in production for many years in order to meet the needs of commercial and industrial users. Short sightedness might result in lower investment cost, but the upfront savings will be spent many times over in the years to follow, trying to keep those consumer grade devices in service.

The fundamental message here is to clearly identify the fundamental task at hand, then select the tool that performs the job most efficiently over the longest period of time. Only then can you realize the maximum return on investment and insure the job is being performed at the highest level of effectiveness.



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