

THE CASE OF THE EMPTY SOAP BOX

One of the most memorable case studies on Japanese management was the case of the empty soap box, which happened in one of Japan's biggest cosmetics companies. The company received a complaint that a consumer had bought a Soap box that was empty. Immediately the authorities isolated the problem to the assembly line, which transported all the packaged boxes of soap to the delivery department. For some reason, one soap box went through the assembly line empty.

Management asked its engineers to solve the problem. Post-haste, the engineers worked hard to devise an X-ray machine with high-resolution monitors manned by two people to watch all the soap boxes that passed through the line to make sure they were not empty. No doubt, they worked hard and they worked fast but they spent a whoopee amount to do so.

Lesson: Look for simple solutions!!