



**Industry:** Manufacturing

**Location:** Sun Prairie, Wisconsin

# Milwaukee Tool: Breaking Language Barriers to Build World-Class Tools with Walt Smart Radio System

"I wholeheartedly believe that our employees deserve to hear the information at the exact same time that everybody else hears it in the exact same way it was delivered to everybody else. Nobody should have to wait for the information because it takes us a while to schedule a translator."



**Ashley Lynch**  
Talent Business Partner,  
Milwaukee Tool



## Business Challenge

For over 100 years, Milwaukee Tool has led the industry with innovative solutions that redefine performance, productivity, and safety for professional trades. As a subsidiary of Techtronic Industries Co. Ltd. (TTI), Milwaukee Tool employs over 10,000 people across 20+ locations in the United States, including their global headquarters, R&D facilities, testing centers, and manufacturing operations throughout southeast Wisconsin.

At their Sun Prairie facility, which produces carbide oscillating blades and manufactures approximately 23 million blades annually with just 200 employees, Milwaukee Tool faced a critical hurdle that challenged their ability to maintain their world-class culture and operational excellence.

Before the team deployed Walt® Smart Radio Systems, the team faced a number of hurdles ranging from training, operational, and an incredibly diverse workforce speaking numerous different languages.

### Training and Development Obstacles:

- Safety-sensitive area training took months to complete due to language barriers
- Employees with exceptional ideas and talents couldn't effectively communicate with leadership
- Career advancement opportunities were limited for non-English speakers
- New employee orientations required scheduling external translators

### Operational Inefficiencies:

- Shift startup meetings pulled employees off production lines for 10-15 minutes every shift
- Safety Toolbox Talks required gathering employees away from their work cells
- Equipment failures and maintenance requests faced communication delays
- Critical safety observations went unreported due to language barriers

### Cultural Impact:

- Untapped potential in a workforce where talented employees couldn't share their expertise
- Barriers to the inclusive culture that Milwaukee Tool prides itself on
- Reduced engagement among non-English speaking team members
- Challenges in building the relationships that form the foundation of Milwaukee's success

As Ashley Lynch, Talent Business Partner, explained:

"We've always had these roadblocks or barriers with communication challenges. It presented barriers in terms of career growth and untapped potential and talent, because we've had this side of our workforce in which we couldn't effectively communicate with."

## Why They Chose Walt Smart Radio System

Milwaukee Tool's leadership recognized that their communication challenges required more than traditional solutions. After evaluating options, the team selected Walt Smart Radio System for its revolutionary AI translation capabilities and its many other communication and safety benefits.



The decision was driven by Milwaukee Tool's core values, especially the belief that people and culture are 'the bookends of our success.' As CEO Steve Richman of parent company Techtronic Industries often emphasizes, breakthrough technology and amazing products are only possible because of the people and the culture they've created together.

Key factors in their decision included:



Real-Time AI Translation:

Eliminated language barriers instantly across multiple languages simultaneously



Cultural Alignment:

Supported Milwaukee Tool's commitment to treating every employee with equal respect and opportunity



Comprehensive Communication Platform:

Combined radio, messaging, forms, and multimedia capabilities in one device



Operational Efficiency:

Enabled communication without pulling employees away from production



Safety Enhancement:

Provided instant safety reporting and emergency communication capabilities

The Solution

Milwaukee Tool implemented Walt Smart Radio System starting with a pilot program in summer 2024, gradually expanding across their two Sun Prairie manufacturing buildings. The implementation included:

Complete Device Deployment:

- Walt Smart Radio devices for all 200+ employees across both buildings
- Management access via smartphone apps for leadership oversight
- Integration with existing operational workflows

Channel Structure:

- Plant-wide announcement channels
- Direct communications from hourly employees to HR delivering, improving service level
- Shift-specific communication channels
- Safety reporting and emergency channels
- Work cell-specific groups for coordination
- Leadership channels for cross-building communication



## Walt Features Implementation:

- Real-time AI translation across all major languages spoken at the facility
- Photo and multimedia sharing for equipment issues and safety observations
- On-device digital forms for safety reporting and “near-miss” documentation
- Walt’s Music for Frontline streaming capabilities through iHeartRadio integration
- Geofencing for location-based communications and desktop monitoring
- Message history and scrollback capabilities for missed conversations
- Multi-site and offsite capabilities for leadership oversight

## Training Integration:

- Walt Smart Radio System introduced on day one of new employee orientation
- Complete their standard 10-hour new employee orientation while using Walt’s AI translation features
- Ongoing safety training delivered through the team’s “Walt Toolbox Talks”

## Simple Implementation, Immediate Results

Walt’s intuitive design enabled rapid adoption across Milwaukee Tool’s diverse workforce. New Milwaukee Tool employees master the Walt system in **just 5-10 minutes during orientation**—learning basic functions like push-to-talk and channel selection. The tap-and-go feature exemplifies this simplicity employees can instantly connect with coworkers by simply tapping their Walt cards to the Walt smart radio, eliminating the need to know everyone’s names or spend time manually finding contact information. This simplicity means even employees who speak different languages can immediately participate in communications without extensive training or technical barriers.

**The Walt system enables seamless communication across the facility’s nine work cells, with employees able to communicate both within their specific areas and plant-wide as needed.**

# The Results

The deployment of Walt Smart Radio System has transformed culture sitewide at Milwaukee Tool’s Sun Prairie facility, delivering measurable improvements across multiple critical areas:

## Time Savings:

- **Transformed shift startup meetings by enabling** by redefining them enabling instant plant-wide communications through Walt
- **Eliminated 5 hours per week** in safety Toolbox Talk downtime by conducting training through Walt while employees remain productive, increasing manufacturing output
- **Ended the practice of pulling employees off work cells** for announcements and updates, maximizing production time

## More meaningful and engaging communication in a shorter amount of time.

By using Walt, Milwaukee Tool significantly reduced the time it took for communications with a human interpreter by eliminating scheduling delays and awkward or frustrating experiences. Additionally, Walt enabled more connected and personal conversations through seamless 1:1 interactions between HR and employees, improving both HR efficiency and employee satisfaction while preserving the personal human interaction that makes these communications most effective.

## Enhanced Safety & Compliance:

- **Dramatic increase in safety observations** reported through easy photo and description submissions, reducing accident risk and improving safety outcomes. In The safety team used these observations to report them out on a daily basis with action items that were taken in a timely manner, showing the team that their input was being heard and making a direct impact.
- **Immediate response capability** for equipment failures and safety concerns, preventing incidents and maintaining production schedules
- **Real-time emergency communication** including severe weather alerts sent from offsite locations, protecting employee safety and avoiding costly shutdowns
- **Streamlined compliance reporting** with digital forms replacing manual processes, reducing administrative burden and ensuring regulatory compliance

### REAL-WORLD IMPACT: EMERGENCY RESPONSE

When a tornado warning appeared on The Weather Channel while the Senior EHSS Coordinator was off-site loading groceries, she immediately used the Walt app to alert supervisors: ***"I was able to coordinate shelter in place twice that day for second shift when I wasn't on site."***

## Improved Operational Efficiency:

**50,000+**

- **Walt messages** transmitted year-to-date, demonstrating high employee engagement
- **Faster maintenance response** through instant photo sharing, enabling technicians to diagnose issues immediately and arrive with correct parts
- **Reduced equipment downtime** through faster maintenance coordination, maximizing production output and revenue
- **Eliminated production interruptions** for routine communications and training, saving significant time and labor costs

## Cultural Transformation:

- **Promoted multiple non-English speakers** to team leadership positions for the first time
- **Reduced training time** in safety-sensitive areas from months to weeks, accelerating time-to-productivity and reducing training costs
- **Enhanced employee engagement** with high participation in company meetings and events, contributing to exceptional retention rates
- **Strengthened relationships** between management and all employees regardless of language, enhancing workplace culture and inclusivity

### REAL-WORLD IMPACT: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

When a Spanish-speaking employee became frustrated during a PPE discussion, the manager retrieved a Walt Smart Radio to bridge the communication gap. Through real-time translation, she was able to explain what PPE was required, and why it was necessary for safety. The conversation ended with both employees ***"hugging it out"*** – a powerful example of how Walt transforms workplace relationships.

## Business Impact:

**97%**

Full-time employee ratio through enhanced career opportunities



Increased internal mobility and promotion opportunities



Enhanced competitive advantage in manufacturing excellence

# Key Use Cases

## Real-Time Translation for Leadership Development

When Milwaukee Tool executives visit for plant tours, non-English speaking employees can now present their work directly using Walt's translation features.

**"Now they're able to use the Walt Smart Radio and take credit for their work, and show off the work that they're doing versus before, somebody else would have had to step in and present on their behalf."**

— Ashley Lynch, Talent Business Partner

## Instant Safety Reporting

Employees submit safety observations through Walt with photos and quick descriptions. Recent examples include blocked fire extinguishers and equipment issues that were immediately addressed, contributing to Milwaukee Tool's strong safety KPIs.

## Cross-Training Excellence

During "Leaders on the Floor" days, management works alongside production employees in different work cells.

**"I worked with one of our employees who does not speak English in one of our newer work cells, and she was able to use the Walt device and completely show me what her day-to-day looked like. We were able to have fluent conversations back and forth and she was able to teach me exactly what she did."**

— Ashley Lynch, Talent Business Partner

## Emergency Response Coordination

When equipment failures occur multiple times daily, teams can immediately communicate and coordinate replacement equipment, minimizing downtime and maintaining tight production schedules.

## Enhanced Employee Experience

New hires receive Walt Smart Radio devices on their first day, ensuring they can fully participate in orientation regardless of their primary language. This creates an inclusive onboarding experience that sets the tone for their entire tenure.

## 24/7 Operational Continuity

With shifts running from 5:00 AM to 1:00 AM and weekend coverage from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM, Walt enables seamless communication handoffs between shifts and immediate response to critical issues.



# The Walt Advantage

Milwaukee Tool's success with Walt Smart Radio System reflects their unique culture and commitment to their people. In an industry where temporary labor is often the norm, Milwaukee Tool maintains more than 90% full-time employees in Sun Prairie. Their approach to culture has fueled remarkable growth.

## The Walt implementation has enabled Milwaukee Tool to:

- **Unlock hidden talent** among their diverse workforce
- **Accelerate career development** for all employees regardless of language
- **Maintain operational excellence** while fostering inclusion
- **Strengthen their competitive advantage** in manufacturing
- **Build deeper employee relationships** that drive retention and engagement

Lynch summarizes the transformation: "It removes so much anxiety about being in a new workplace and maybe not knowing as many people and not speaking English, just knowing that now you can communicate effectively with your coworkers. It builds our engagement and our culture and it's everything that we want to have in our workplace."

## Ready to Transform Your Manufacturing Operations?

Milwaukee Tool's success demonstrates how Walt Smart Radio System can break down communication barriers while delivering measurable operational improvements. Walt by weavix has enabled Milwaukee Tool's Sun Prairie location to make world-class blades while maintaining a work environment that prioritizes the aspects of People and Culture that have been so critical to the company's overall success.

Contact Weavix today to learn how Walt Smart Radio System can unlock your workforce's full potential and drive operational excellence.

✉ [hello@weavix.com](mailto:hello@weavix.com)

🔍 [For more information on our Walt Smart Radio System in manufacturing visit.](#)

