

MORE THAN LEAN OPERATIONS

SELLING THE IDEA

How do we convince others that *lean* activities are paying their way?

Before starting *lean* activities, establish baseline measurements in all of the areas to be measured. For example, determine defect levels, cycle time, work-in-process, inventory levels, etc. At a later date these measures can be repeated for a convincing before-and-after comparison.

Do successful *lean* operations exhibit certain common characteristics?

In general, common characteristics found in successful *lean* operations can be summarized as follows:

- Management is supportive
- Training is an integral part of the activity
- Waste of all kinds is a constant target for reduction and elimination
- A people-building philosophy prevails
- Before and after measurements provide quantitative evidence of improvement

What is people-building?

The concept of *lean* operations is based upon trust, respect and caring. There are no human characteristics more powerful in developing self-reliance, competence and cooperation in others. People-building means helping individuals become better than they already are. It means believing that they have the capacity to grow and develop. It requires a willingness to provide the training to make this happen. And it requires having the patience to allow it to happen.

THE STEERING COMMITTEE

What is the steering committee?

The steering committee creates a vision statement and sets goals and objectives for *lean* operations in its company. It establishes operational guidelines and *controls the rate of expansion*. A chairperson should preside over the committee, and decisions should be reached by democratic process. Steering duties include:

- Creating the vision
- Acting as a solid and visible supporter
- Meeting regularly, at least monthly
- Creating a policy and procedure statement for the improvement process
- Providing guidance on areas for the teams to work on

When should the steering committee be formed?

As soon as a decision has been made to implement a *lean* operations process.

Who should be on the steering committee?

Representatives from major departments within the company should be included in the steering committee. For example, in a factory it's common to have representatives from such diverse areas as manufacturing, quality control, personnel, education and training, engineering, finance, marketing and the union. The continuous improvement coordinator should also be a member.

Where Lean Thoughts can become Reality

"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow."

Ronald. E. Osborn

ESTABLISHING LEAN LEADERSHIP FOR SUCCESS

What level people should be on the steering committee?

Decision makers and possibly individuals who influence the decision makers.

How many people should be on the steering committee?

Seven or eight individuals work well. No more than can be heard from at every meeting because involvement and participation by all is vital.

Can a company have more than one steering committee?

Yes, especially if plants are geographically separated. A variation is a corporate-level steering committee that establishes major overall policy and lower-level steering committees that operate closer to the improvement activities.

THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT COORDINATOR

What is the role of the continuous improvement coordinator?

The coordinator is the individual responsible for successfully coordinating and directing *lean* activities within an organization.

What does the coordinator do?

The duties of the coordinator include the following:

Ensuring that the policies of the steering committee are understood and are followed by everyone involved.

Establishing an ongoing education and training program per the dictates of the steering committee.

Personally conducting training and/or arranging for competent instructors to do it.

Providing guidance and feedback to team leaders regarding their meetings and other activities.

Maintaining awareness of world-class improvement strategies no matter where they are.

Monitoring team progress and achievements.

Communicating team achievements to other groups throughout the facility.

What qualifications should the coordinator have?

The coordinator has been described as a facilitator, catalyst, coach, innovator, promoter and teacher. The point is that it takes a special person to do the job right. The coordinator should be as comfortable talking to the president of the company as to the entry-level clerical or factory employee.

When should the coordinators be selected?

When a definite decision is made to implement *lean* activities. The steering committee is also started about this same time. Sometimes, the first task of the steering committee is to select the coordinator.

To whom does the coordinator report?

Usually the coordinator is on the staff of a high-level company official who strongly supports *lean* activities. In some instances, the coordinator reports to the company president. In a factory, the coordinator usually reports to the director of manufacturing.

Who is the team leader?

Experience demonstrates that your *lean* activities will have a greater chance of success when the supervisor is the initial leader. The *lean* concept gains quicker acceptance when it fits into the existing organizational structure. The supervisor is already designated to perform a leadership role in that structure. If *lean* activities didn't operate within the existing organizational setup, some people might believe they are creating a competing organization.