

EXPERT TIPS

LEAN—Not Just A Manufacturing Tool

Reducing Waste Using LEAN Facilitation

Lean thinking is based upon the Toyota Production System and has been used successfully in manufacturing environments for many years. LEAN is now moving into other areas: healthcare, administrative units, customer service, and more. The potential for making a difference by improving non-manufacturing processes is huge.

LEAN is about reducing waste in the organization—reducing the non-value-added activities that your customers are unwilling to pay you for. It's easy to see waste on the production floor, but not as easy to see it in administrative functions.

The Challenge:

How can you identify waste in an administrative area? For example, what types of waste might you find? Here are some examples that occur in administrative functional areas:

1. **Overproduction** – producing work or providing a service before it is required or requested.
2. **Inventory** – stock, work piles, excess supplies, or obsolete equipment.
3. **Waiting** – waiting for anything including people, signatures or information.
4. **Non-Value-Added Processing** – Over-processing by putting more work or effort into the work required by the internal or external customer.
5. **Defects/Rework/Iterations of Work** – multiple drafts, missing data on documents, data entry errors, lost files, interruptions and random arrivals.
6. **Excess Motion** – walking to and from the copier, searching for files and work documents, hand-carrying paperwork to another person.
7. **Transportation** – delivering documents that are not required, excessive filing of work documents, e-mail distribution lists that are not up-to-date.
8. **Under-utilized People** – no method to encourage or capture improvement ideas.

Leadership is key to successful LEAN implementations. Here are some ideas for you:

- Commit to a long-term improvement process, providing vision through difficult times, resources, and no “flavor-of-the-month” thinking.
- Before trying to change others, change yourself.
- Remember, you get what you structure for and what you tolerate—evaluate your organization's needs and commit to a “journey” not a one-time activity.
- Align your strategy, marketing, organizational structure, decision making and metrics.
- Make it safe for others to learn and try.
- There is no single prescription for success—challenge your paradigms and find what works best in your organization.

