

1 of 1 DOCUMENT

Graphic Arts MONTHLY

Graphic Arts Monthly

July 1, 2006

How Going Lean Made Kell Better

BYLINE: By Kevin Cooper

SECTION: COLUMNS; BestTrack; Pg. 17

LENGTH: 500 words

Over the past few months, I've attended industry conferences in Scottsdale, Orlando, Richmond and Chicago. Of note, at each one there was an ongoing focus on lean business principles and their application in the print industry. There is growing emphasis on finding ways to embrace lean thinking in print and break down traditional paradigms that limit printer's profitability and opportunity for growth. Consider the story of Kell Container.

Kell produces corrugated shipping containers, point-of-purchase and sale displays, and graphic printed consumer packaging out of its Chippewa Falls, WI facility. The company began its journey into lean in 2003. Management representatives some of what they've learned at PIA/GATF's Continuous Improvement Network spring conference in Arizona.

Lean is a total enterprise strategy. Lean thinking is not constrained to only manufacturing but a business strategy that involves the entire company. Many lean tools are implemented on a small scale to get momentum rolling, but your thinking about change should embrace the entire business model.

Lean's primary thrust is the elimination of waste. Anything that is not adding value to your customer is defined as waste and must be eliminated. This thinking challenges many preconceptions about how business is conducted and allows you to reexamine your business processes from a customer's perspective.

Lean's focus on reducing setup times minimizes the benefit of economies of scale-allowing for shorter print runs and improved responsiveness to customer needs.

Lean works from the bottom up. Empowered employee teams working smarter, not harder, make key company decisions. Lean addresses manufacturing improvements through a people-centric process. It is not a cost, or inventory, reduction program, nor is it a way to reduce headcount. Lean is a total process improvement methodology that will create capacity, generate cash flow, improve customer service and improve materials flow.

To move in the lean direction, Kell trained more than 100 employees in the Japanese "5S" principles. The company has held 5S events on all 25 of their major machine centers over 15 months. Teams wear special 5S vests when an event is taking place to highlight the improvement focus. In synch with lean's focus on visual management, machines have been painted white and additional lighting has been added to make ongoing inspections easier.

How Going Lean Made Kell Better Graphic Arts Monthly July 1, 2006

Following 5S implementation, Kell focused on set-up reduction. The set-up process is videotaped, and pedometers are used to count actual steps taken by crew members performing their tasks. Teams analyze their work with a focus on moving all possible set-up steps to times when the machine is already running a job, thus minimizing the downtime between jobs. Teams videotape their actual set-ups monthly to ensure that improvements are being sustained.

Most recently, Kell is moving into the lean tools of Value Stream mapping and Kaizen, as lean thinking is expanded throughout its print business.

LOAD-DATE: July 18, 2006

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Magazine

Copyright 2006 Reed Business Information, US, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc.
All Rights Reserved