

Ritchie & Associates

The Performance Improvement Consultants, Since 1967

Overcoming “A Stumble out of the Gate”-\$2.0M in Savings

Client Profile:

This corporation is a dominant force in the design and manufacture of windows, doors, and specialty entry systems. They have three manufacturing facilities and a workforce of 1,400 employees. Their full range of high quality, value-priced, custom windows and doors are sold to new homebuilders, dealers, and industrial customers throughout North America.

The Need & Approach:

While experiencing rapid growth, driven by a hot construction market and innovative new products, this client was seemingly “bursting at the seams.” Backlog was growing, lead times were lengthening and their largest factory was land-locked. The COO, self-educated in Lean, made a decision to “Get Lean.” The client concluded that the plants were already arranged by value stream and any major rearrangement would not be required. The Lean program started with a training blitz, followed by “point kaizens” to install a 5-S program. Eventually some kanban systems were installed and measureable improvements were being seen.

However, 18 months into their journey momentum had slowed considerably. Program gains were deteriorating and savings were no longer being measured. The client, in retrospect, realized they jumped into Lean with a lack of understanding and not knowing the proper approach. They “stumbled out of the gate” and needed outside assistance to get back in the race.

We conducted a two-week Analysis to assess the “current state” of four value streams, comparing each to a Lean model that closely resembled the Toyota Production System. It was determined that the plant was in fact arranged by major value stream, but the depth of the 5-S program had stopped with shadow boards. There was no standard work, an equipment reliability platform had not been defined and the kanban system had many impediments.

The Work & Results:

Working in conjunction with the client’s team, a “model value stream” approach was developed. Ritchie & Associates led the design, development and implementation of the standardized work platform and in-station process control systems and associated tools and techniques. The client focused on installing the equipment reliability platform and elements of an internal JIT program.

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The combined efforts resulted in throughput and/or productivity increases of 18% over 30 calendar weeks without capital investment. Furthermore, an infrastructure of continuous improvement was implemented along with a roadmap for rolling out the process to the remaining six value streams.

“I wholeheartedly endorse the approach, methods and people of Ritchie & Associates. They are an excellent group to work with and we intend to utilize their services again in the not too distant future.”

Chief Operating Officer