

## Three Ways Lean Manufacturing Can Change Your Workplace

“Work smarter, not harder,” is a concept credited to the late Allan H. Mogensen, an industrial engineer and industry consultant that introduced the work simplification process to the world in the 1930s. Since then, it’s been a business mantra that promotes productivity and efficiencies in the workplace—especially when it comes to lean manufacturing, which is instilled within a company when management works toward a plan to eliminate wasted resources, money and time.

### A brief history of lean manufacturing

The basic ideology behind lean manufacturing was brought to us by one of the country’s founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin. In his essay, “The Way to Wealth,” featured in *Poor Richard’s Almanac*, Franklin shared advice about carrying unneeded inventory and how avoiding unnecessary costs could make your company even more money than increasing prices.

Years later, we’ve expanded upon the ideas of Mogensen and Franklin. Companies all over the world strive to follow Mogensen’s motto by gaining efficiencies as well as cutting operating costs via a lean manufacturing process.

As a National Supply Chain Manager for Airgas, an Air Liquide company, Andy Nugent works alongside shop supervisors every day to execute strategic lean manufacturing plans that drive success. Nugent believes there are three areas where lean manufacturing can truly make a difference and help your company quickly reduce waste and unnecessary costs.

### Removing stock issues

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If you're noticing consistent and untimely inventory issues such as stock outages or frequent and delayed orders or shipments, it might be time to consider a strategic change. Consider the following:

- **High-level observances:** What does your process look like and where do you think your company can improve?
- **Current supply chain:** Are employees frequently coming to you to ask for more tools or safety equipment?
- **Time management:** Do you find yourself focusing on products you need instead of actual production?

Answering yes to any of these questions raises the flag that stock issues do indeed exist and a lean manufacturing plan can help turn your processes around for the better. A deeper evaluation of current procedures can pinpoint vulnerabilities and areas where lean manufacturing can realize cost and time savings.

## Reducing chaos

One of the most common circumstances that contributes to workplace chaos includes lack of organization with product inventory and orders.

A tactical delivery schedule could reduce waste of product and money if your company is experiencing any of the following:

- The need to issue multiple purchase orders each week
- Making emergency delivery orders (typically for safety products)
- Ordering product in very high quantities once or twice per year

Nugent recommends a strategic stocking program if your delivery schedule (or lack thereof) is keeping you up at night. He suggests, "Rather

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than having employees wandering around the shop floor looking for a part they need to do their job, it's very helpful to set up a program where product is shipped regularly and inventory is organized and managed per location. Once you eliminate stock outages as well as time and energy spent procuring those products, you should see a positive and swift change in your work environment."

### **Taking control of the situation**

All supervisors are looking for an element of organization and healthy control when managing inventory and product. Additionally, many find themselves considering how they can become more efficient and cost conscious within this area. Nugent wants supervisors to know that having a plan in place can make them the superhero of the business.

Nugent believes, "The process starts at the end user, the person who's doing the work. For example, when an employee needs a piece of safety equipment, they might first go to a supervisor to make the request and then they are given the item they need. This is a common scenario where a company would benefit from streamlining the process with something like a vending machine on the work floor. This way, the first employee could have easily gotten the item right then and there because the supervisor has put a lean manufacturing process into play."

### **As an added bonus, you can reduce stress**

Just like relying on electricity when you plug something into an outlet, you can rely on your shipment to be there on time to stock your vending machine or other type of system you choose. Choosing the right supplier can ensure stock is there on time in accordance with the service plan you agreed upon. Clutter and wasted time are eliminated when you have a strong lean manufacturing process in place.

Rethinking your work processes can seem daunting and is easy to put off; however, evaluating business stock issues, chaos and efficiencies (or inefficiencies) is imperative if a business needs to course correct and desires

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to take advantage of the benefits of lean manufacturing.

By adopting a lean manufacturing model and executing on a strong program, your company can experience a sense of security and ease. This will in turn allow employees and employers to whole-heartedly focus on their work and tasks at hand.