Title:
Go Lean To Eliminate Waste

Word Count:
437

Summary:
Surplus inventory is one of the seven "muda" or wasteful processes identified in the lean manufacturing methodology. Eliminating them can be applied to any manufacturing or production process to achieve performance improvement.

Keywords:
lean manufacturing, Eliminate Waste

Article Body:
Surplus inventory is one of the seven "muda" or wasteful processes identified in the lean manufacturing methodology. Eliminating them can be applied to any manufacturing or production process to achieve performance improvement.

Raw materials, work in progress and finished product ties up valuable capital into the production chain when it could be released for better use within the business. Handling and storage utilizes valuable space, takes up time and resources and adds even more costs. Shortening production lead times and reducing handling and storage tasks releases capital and cash.

Leading manufacturers have found that modular and adaptable carts, trolleys and lineside storage facilities can help to introduce flexible processes and deliver materials and components to the lineside when they are needed to align production more closely with demand.

Modular systems enable rapid implementation and reconfiguration. New or temporary applications can be built quickly and adapted easily to meet changing process requirements. This means that the overall cost of implementation and ownership is reduced because all components can be re-used for new applications.

Carts and trolleys can be designed to carry precise numbers of specific items to the lineside. Parts supermarkets can be created at the lineside and replenished frequently when stocks fall below predetermined levels. The overall result is that the amount of inventory in the supply chain can be reduced. Manufacturers can also introduce greater agility into their processes to respond more quickly to changing customer demands.

Reduce wasteful production movements

Another of the seven "muda" is unnecessary handling and storage movements. Unnecessary movement in the working area adds to the time taken to complete a task which reduces productivity and adds to costs. It occurs when items such as tools, equipment and components are positioned so that staff have to walk, reach or stretch to collect or handle them.

To avoid these wasteful movements, modular workstations and storage areas can be configured ergonomically so that items are in the correct position and close to hand whenever they are needed. The savings in movements achieved by staff reduce the overall time taken to complete a task or process and this contributes to increased productivity and performance.

Ergonomic production and storage areas also present staff with fewer distractions which means they are less likely to make mistakes and this helps improve overall quality.

Adaptable workstations and parts supermarkets can be designed to take up the correct space - no more, no less - to accommodate the specific manufacturing process. In addition to improving ergonomics this helps increase overall production density because more workstations or manufacturing cells can be fitted into the same space which reduces the cost of each.