

### What is Lean Manufacturing?

Lean manufacturing is a systematic process you can implement to switch your business from one that wastes time, energy, space, and money to one that runs efficiently. Another description of lean manufacturing would be using less work while still maintaining top value.

Lean manufacturing is not a one-time process that, once you have completed the steps, you are finished. Rather, it is ongoing, requiring frequent checks to make sure all improvements are still in place. While it is an ongoing process, the effort it takes to maintain lean manufacturing is less onerous than the work involved in keeping up unorganized, wasteful business processes.

Two of the biggest goals with lean manufacturing are to improve quality and to eliminate waste. Improving quality involves being aware of what your customers are looking for, as well as continually making that product better so you not only keep your customers, you also gain more. Eliminating waste means getting rid of or reorganizing items or activities which waste either materials or time and provide no true value to the workplace.

Lean manufacturing includes taking note of what wastes occur throughout the business. Only when the wastes have been noted can they be dealt with. Lean

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manufacturing organizes waste into seven different categories—transport, inventory, motion, waiting, overproduction, overprocessing, and defects.

There are various ways to incorporate lean manufacturing. One is through the 5S system, which immediately targets and eliminates areas of waste before organizing the areas to be efficient. It is probably the simplest of the lean manufacturing methods and is easy to get everyone on the team actively involved in.

Another method is *kaizen*, which is what Toyota is famous for using to become the booming automobile manufacturer it is today. Essentially, the *kaizen* method has every worker step back and study how their job is performed to identify areas that could be eliminated or improved to make the process simpler and faster. As every person is involved, and is looking at their own field of work, they can best know how to target problem areas and solve them. Together, this makes an entire business run much *more* efficiently.

To implement lean manufacturing in your business, you will need to prepare before introducing it to your employees. Once it is introduced, you will need to train every individual and make them aware of how important it is that they all work together to make lean manufacturing possible. A detailed plan will need to be drawn up as to how to train workers, as well as how to effectively

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integrate—and maintain—lean manufacturing techniques. Lean methods can work in any area of a business to help improve production and reduce waste.

