

## **A Lean manufacturing approach at Parker-Hannifin has produced immediate payback to both the business and staff. Anthony Landale highlights a winning strategy.**

### *Smart thinking*

There is a revolution in manufacturing today. Increased competition in the global marketplace is putting huge pressure on organisations and, as a result, we have the concept of Lean manufacturing - an approach which instils standardised disciplines and which aims to reduce cost, increase quality and boost productivity.

Indeed Lean manufacturing can be seen as a way to establish a new culture of thinking and behaviour in every facet of the value stream.

### *So does it work? And if so how?*

Like many other strategies, Lean has its advocates and its critics. That said there is little doubt that Lean can not only produce the business improvements that manufacturers are looking for but can also engage the commitment and motivation of staff.

Lean is as much about empowering people as using any given set of tools. In this respect it's about the smart use of people applying themselves to a shared way of thinking about problems, opportunities, and improvement.

***"Staff within a Lean organisation, practising Lean thinking, are not only focusing on the elimination of waste; rather they are building a culture which centres on how to produce products in the best possible way for customers."***

One company that is currently undertaking the Lean journey is Parker Hannifin, a \$6billion organisation that manufactures motion and control technologies and

systems for a wide variety of commercial, industrial and aerospace markets worldwide.

The company's lean strategy started in America where it proved extremely successful and is now being rolled out in the UK and Europe. Karl Norton is the Lean Champion at Parker Hannifin's Filtration Division location in Dewsbury and he explained his role in the initiative.

"As Lean champion it's my role to drive through the Lean philosophy," he said. "This is a dedicated role that includes on-site training, ensuring that the principles of Lean are being adhered to and that the Lean tools are being applied consistently across the organisation."

"At the Dewsbury site we aim to get all 200 people involved. We are focusing on everything from the streamlining of operations and the elimination of waste through to visual management within the factory and how best to introduce new products. Our success will be based not so much on how hard we work but on how smart we work - that's the real potential of Lean and that requires us to empower our people."

Helping Karl Norton with the implementation of Lean is Pera Integrated Training who specialise in manufacturing best practice and who have a track record in running Lean manufacturing programmes.

"We knew Pera and had worked with their Knowledge division before," explained Karl. "And under the terms of our Lean initiative we needed to run Kaizen workshops led by an external Sensei. This is the equivalent of bringing in an external consultant with demonstrable experience in Lean principles to work with us on continuous improvement. Pera's resident Sensei, Nick Davis, fulfilled this role for us.

"His role has been more like that of facilitator than trainer," continued Karl. "This was an intensive event focusing on the value stream for a particular product

and team. Nick helped us to investigate the value stream map for the product in order to visualise areas of waste and we tackled those areas within the event. We have also reported the results of the event in hard financial terms to our Corporate HQ in the States. This is part of the global corporate strategy and is a way of monitoring and measuring our improvements.”

Mr Nick Davis, Lean Founder of Pera said, “Many people talk about Lean as simply a collection of tools and techniques but that’s

not the whole picture. The real benefit from Lean comes from the consistent application of best practice across the organisation and that requires a more people-focussed approach. Staff within a Lean organisation, practising Lean thinking, are not only focussing on the elimination of waste; rather they are building a culture which centres on how to produce products in the best possible way for customers.”