



Strategic Business Partners



## CASE STUDY

# DSL SWITCHGEAR LEAN MANUFACTURING PROJECT

## THE COMPANY

DSL Switchgear is a Manchester based subsidiary of a multi national French owned manufacturing group. They manufacture switchgear for both the domestic market and internationally. At the start of the project the company employed around 120 people and turned over around £35m and were making a loss. The company performed all processes on the site manufacturing, sales, design, sourcing etc.

## THE ASSIGNMENT

The assignment was to introduce the concepts of lean manufacturing, train all staff and reduce the waste in the processes and develop the profitability of the organisation. Following a diagnostic of the company the key areas of materials flow, stock reduction and education and training were identified as areas to concentrate on. It was agreed that over a 12 month period using around 100 consulting days the company would look to transform from an old fashioned manufacturing unit to one which would embrace lean principles.

## INITIAL ACTIVITIES

The initial diagnostic identified the areas that needed to be developed. Two key product lines were worked on and using a Kaizen approach workshops and improvement activities were run. The Kaizen workshops concentrated on putting measures of performance in place for throughput, lead-time, stock holding, implementation of shop floor ideas and product cost reduction. The event included some of the activities below: -

- Process mapping of the production and information flow
- 5S of the area and implementation of standards
- Introduction of cellular manufacturing
- Introduction of Kanbans
- Use of TPM on key machines
- Spaghetti charting the flow of materials and people
- Stock profiling
- Production planning
- Education and training in Lean thinking using simulation games and classroom training.

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To ensure that the improvements were implemented a team of full time lean experts were trained in both lean principles and how to implement improvements and the concepts of change management. Senior managers were also put through extensive training to ensure their understanding and support.

## **FURTHER ACTIVITIES**

The project then took the same principles and implemented the ideas, principles and training to all the other lines in the factory. This meant that Poke Yoke devices were used, visual management and 5S became a way of life, SMED principles were implemented, Kanbans both internally and externally were put in place and the education process was extended. Further work was then undertaken to improve the front end of the business and the design and new product introduction process.

## **BENEFITS**

Apart from educating and training the whole staff in lean principles and how to implement them, 4 key personnel became trained internal consultants. Other non-tangible benefits included reduction of fire fighting, improved morale, shared vision and a company that wanted to put forward improvement suggestions. Tangible benefits included: -

- reduced product cost by an average of 20%
- reduced staffing, down from 120 to 93
- increased productivity approximately 40%
- lead time down from 10 days to 2 day
- inventory turns increased by 5
- turnover increased by 28%

DSL hopes to continue to show the improvements in the coming years and to show to the group how they were obtained and transfer skills and techniques where they can.

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