

Lean Manufacturing Goes Molecular

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The first meeting is with a company president, vice president of operations or lean manufacturing champion. The typical goal is to identify a factory in the company's system that may qualify for an audit.

Step 2: Discovery Day at the Factory

A technical team visits the candidate factory to determine if a process audit is appropriate. The objective is to ensure that there is a high probability of success. During discovery day, the technical team plans work that must be done to begin a process audit. This involves discussions with plant management and the maintenance department.

Step 3: The Process Audit

Working through the maintenance department, controllers, sensors and probes are installed. A phone line or Ethernet connection is required so data can be monitored via the Internet. Installation is complete in a day. Moreover, the process audit does not interfere with normal operations.

Step 4: Continuous Improvement Proposals

Using data gathered during the process audit, several proposals for continuous improvement are suggested. These are reviewed with plant and senior management.

Step 5: Implement & Document

The auditor is at the factory 24/7 via technology—gathering hard data—but the client's workers must implement process changes. Typically, auditors meet with the client every 90 days to check on progress and review data.

Step 6: Do It Again

Continuous improvement is a never-ending process. After a predetermined amount of time, the relationship usually continues on a month-to-month subscription, and a continuous stream of process improvement projects are approved and implemented.

In conducting audits over the past year, Profit Finders has discovered that a few simple techniques go a long way towards a successful outcome: Get your Internet connection in place early. Sometimes providing a simple phone line or Ethernet connection so process audit data is readily accessed via the Internet takes longer than anticipated. (Often your information technology department wants to get

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involved for security reasons.) Get this done early, so the start of a process audit is not delayed.

Have your maintenance department spend time with the audit team during discovery day. Maintenance personnel need to install the controllers and probes that gather valuable data, and should be involved at the front end. Assign a task force with a leader to meet at the plant with auditors every 90 days.

An outside auditor can gather data and document improvements, but the task force is at the plant every day. They have to make process changes happen on the shop floor. Keep senior management involved. Have the task force present results to senior management every 90 days. It is best to have the task force take ownership and credit for the improvements realized as well.

For more information, please visit www.profitfinders.net [1].

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[1] <http://www.profitfinders.net/>