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WHAT IS LEAN

Lean principles started in the Japanese manufacturing industry. Lean is a process that identifies and eliminates waste in all areas of business. Lean manufacturing centers around placing small stockpiles of inventory in strategic locations around the assembly line. Known as Kanban, these small stockpiles significantly reduce waste and enhance productivity.

Lean provides optimum quality by examining each part immediately after manufacture. If a defect is found, production stops and the problem identified. Lean manufacturing has a lot in common with Total Quality Management (TQM). Both systems empower workers, in the belief that those closest to production have the greatest knowledge of how the system should work.

In lean manufacturing, suppliers may deliver small lots of product on a daily basis and machines are not necessarily run at full capacity. One of the primary focuses of lean manufacturing is to eliminate waste, which is anything that does not add value to the final product. Large inventories are seen as a type of waste that carries a high cost. In addition, the supply chain management needs to have tight relationships with suppliers in order to facilitate product flow and parts to the shop floor.

Lean manufacturing can save millions of dollars and produce excellent results. Some advantages include lower lead times, reduced set up times, lower equipment expense and increased profits. It gives the manufacturer a competitive edge by reducing costs and increasing quality by allowing the company to be more responsive to customer demands.

