

Superior's Three-Day Kaizen Event

On February 17, 18 and 19, 2004, the first of six scheduled intercompany Kaizen events was completed and focused on Superior Concrete's Sales Department. The event included eight members from five other Oldcastle precast plants (Afco, Rehoboth, Avon, Chase and Telford), along with four Superior Concrete employees. Wayne Messer, local M.E.P. representative, and Peter Allen, Superior's Lean Supervisor, facilitated the Kaizen teams. The event was based on Pump Station and Commercial Sales processes.



Scott Dickman, Superior's General Manager, said, "The challenge to be the first Kramer plant to host a Northeast Lean Kaizen event began in early January when Superior employees value stream mapped our sales department's current and futures states, identifying 25 possible Kaizen blasts for the 3-day venture. The two teams focused on Superior's priorities and, through teamwork and brainstorming, developed tools, not only for Superior's road to success, but the Northeast division. The team building success from the intercompany participation was a northeast landmark paving the way for future intercompany Lean events."

The first day of the event involved a review of the ground rules and agenda for the next three days. The group was trained on the Kaizen Ten Steps process. The continuous improvement culture supports and incorporates the PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT cycle into all aspects of the processes.

The class was divided into two teams and team mandates were planned out. This process sets boundaries, scope and roles. A *Storyboard* is started, which identifies the problems along with the current and ideal situation. Target measurements and Kaizen plans were also set for each team. Using individual brainstorming, the *Fishbone* chart (a process of identifying root causes by discussion and clarification) is used. After finding the root causes, a *Measurement* chart is set up, showing the current, ideal and the target's measurements.

On the second day of the event, the teams worked on their *Kaizen Idea Sheets*, documenting the problems and developed ideas of how they could be corrected. The action items were set and the team worked on their Kaizen burst.

The burst for the Commercial Sales was **"No standard price sheets"** and the team members for the event were Bob Poirier, Bob Robbins, Keven Boris, Bill Evans, Ken Pasco and Loretta Wolf, with Peter Allen facilitating. While brainstorming, the team thought of and decided to set up a program for standard product pricing on the computer using Excel and importing data from Axapta. This would allow efficient, easy and accurate pricing for each product line. Pricing now can be given to customers quickly over the telephone, e-mail and fax. The new tool will assist outside sales with

faster customer service, eliminating the need to call customers back or involve an inside project manager. An instruction sheet for maintaining and updating the price list was created and is to be used for a monthly price list update.

The team members for Pump Station Sales Kaizen were Matt Bourgoin, Leo Albert, Bob Kramer, Joel Dickinson, Kurt Farrington, Pat Holleran and Ben Hampton, with Wayne Messer as the facilitator. A total of three bursts were chosen because they tied closely: **"1) No approval process for IM/SM/GM 2) No standard job folders 3) No standard submittal booklet."** The team found that the current situation had lack of flow, loss of internal control, increased cycle time and some confusion.

"Kaizen" is continuous, incremental improvement of an activity to create more value with less waste.

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To create an “ideal situation,” they would have to eliminate confusion, smooth out the flow, gain control and decrease cycle time. The team brainstormed and completed some of these great ideas: a supermarket for submittal books set up in the storage room with min/max levels; tabs for job closeout information; standardized approval procedures; sales order lines on shop drawings; a procedure for releasing large ticket items; standardized project folders; an assembly book for C.E.V.; a release-for-production stamp; a new job resume to include Dispatch and reduced copies of shop drawings.

On the last day, both teams reviewed their Kaizen plans and updated their Storyboards. They collected actual data for implementation and they worked on the *Spaghetti* chart (documented actual steps of a process), where they followed the flow of procedures. The teams brainstormed ideas and performed trial runs to see if there are any bottlenecks in the flow. The teams divided the work to be finished. While some of them were working on the price list, others were figuring out target measurements.

The Pump Station Sales Team reviewed their target measurements, and established through the root cause summary, savings in **confusion, flow approval process, lost of control, cycle time, no standard and overtime**, for a total savings of **\$128,300**.



At the end of the day, everyone regrouped together. All staff members and all affected personnel were asked to join in a final team “check out” and review the successes for the three days. This is a process where the teams discuss the areas that have been affected and what changes have taken place for each department. This is the time to obtain “buy in” from the staff that will implement the new procedures, the two teams present to the staff “savings” checks (described in the two paragraphs above) and describe what successes have come out of the three days for each individual member of the two teams. All of the paperwork is gathered and documented, which is then placed into a logbook for future reference.

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Any items that are not finished by the end of the event are placed on the *30-day To Do List*, where team members set up deadlines to complete each task. As for sustaining, the Commercial Sales Team created an instruction sheet for maintaining and updating the price sheets.

The Commercial Sales Kaizen Team measured savings in **non-value added time, lost time, time searching and price variances** and came up with a total savings of **\$127,500**.

Next scheduled Kaizen event:

When: April 20-22, 2004

Host: Chase Precast, North Brookfield, MA

Event: Utility Vault Production