



Case Study

Marshalls West Lane — Laying the foundation stones for success

Treading the Lean Path

With 250 staff, the West Lane operation is Marshalls’ largest employer. It operates two 12 hour shifts producing 8 million units per year across 750 different products.



The site consists of several distinct departments ranging from cast concrete curbs to pressed concrete drainage units.

Alistair Gladstone, General Manager of Yorkshire Productivity, introduced the meeting with a summary of the training and implementation support already undertaken at Marshalls West Lane:

- ◆ 5S training for all staff
- ◆ Implementation support
- ◆ Introduction of 5S auditing procedures
- ◆ Business Improvement Techniques NVQs
- ◆ Performing Manufacturing Operations NVQs
- ◆ Skills for Life

Prior to the site tour, the visitors were taken through a comprehensive review of Marshalls’ lean manufacturing progress by Andy Robinson, National Manufacturing Manager of Marshalls, Mick Connor, Business Unit Manager and Robert Crosby, Continuous

Improvement Team Leader.

Andy explained that competition from overseas had intensified over the last 3 years — especially from China, India and Eastern Europe.

As with everything else, people wanted better products but wanted to pay less.

Andy stressed that efficiency was the key to success. There was a need to empower employees and encourage their involvement. Major changes and improvements had been implemented at West Lane over the last 12 months.

A Six Sigma Black Belt and true believer in Lean, Mick Connor recognised the challenge of the external trading environment and the level of internal competition – if unit costs are too expensive at one site, Marshalls would move production to one of its other sites.

Marshalls PLC

The UK’s number one landscape transformation company, Marshalls aims to offer full solutions to both commercial and domestic needs.

Over 3,000 people are employed throughout its 33 manufacturing sites, 12 service centres and 14 offices.

Established in the late 1880’s at West Lane, Southowram, West Yorkshire, Marshalls is now the UK’s leading manufacturer of superior natural stone.



With over 50 attendees from companies as diverse as bus and coach manufacturer,



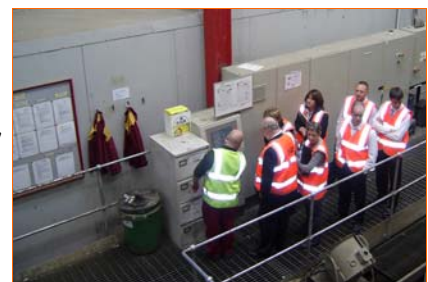
Full House for Members’ Event

Optare, and engineering company, David Brown, the Yorkshire Productivity Members’ meeting at Marshalls’ West Lane operation attracted a full house.

Members’ meetings allow colleagues at all stages of the lean journey to learn about how efficiency improvements are being implemented in other manufacturing operations and see the practical applications via a factory tour. Regardless of the differences in types of products manufactured or company sizes, attendees invariably find Members’ events to be extremely productive and worthwhile.

As, Brian Keeley of Heritage, a previous host, commented: “It was a very productive day - we have already ordered whiteboards for delivery tomorrow so that we can start the hourly noting of production in a similar way to Marshalls’ Visual Management.

“We pick up a little gem every time we attend a Yorkshire Productivity day.”



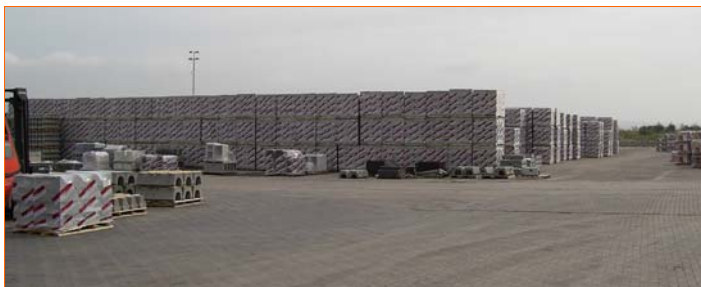
First Lean Steps

On his arrival with the company, Mick recognised that this competitive environment called for an immediate step change in morale, quality, cost, safety and service.

Mick's first step was to create a compass setting and communicate his vision directly to his workforce. The operation needed to add value, eliminate waste and produce quality products that people wanted.

"West Lane was the first site to utilise robot technology in the production process but we also recognised the need to train to fill any skills gaps," explained Mick.

"We developed a relationship with an effective training provider, Yorkshire Productivity, and started 5S training. 5S creates a solid foundation so it was logical to start with this. The backing and commitment of senior management is vital if lean implementation is to be successful."



Robert Crosby explained how lean was being introduced in practice.

The whole site, over 207 employees, had received 5S training.

In addition, Marshalls West Lane had started to roll out a NVQ Business Improvement Techniques (BIT) for Team Leaders programme – 8 NVQs had already been awarded and 20 more were planned.

Ten colleagues had been through NVQ Performing Manufacturing Operations (PMO) with a further 30 due to finish by the end of the year.

An ongoing strategic partnership had been developed with Yorkshire Productivity.



"The 5S roadmap was a massive project which was broken down into manageable chunks," explained Robert.

Five levels of improvement were identified, departments were photographed and staff took ownership of responsibility for their areas.

Understandably, there were some barriers to implementation from different working cultures. It was important to set a direction with a site mission statement and not deviate from this path.

A value exchange partnership was linked into 5S and there was a concerted effort to focus on positives rather than negatives.

Involvement and ownership was important —

created by regular team meetings, documented site briefings and weekly and monthly audits.

Gradually a change in staff behaviour was seen using the value exchange partnership as an incentive, stimulating cross pollination and healthy competition.

Mick reflected: "The introduction of lean practices is already producing intangible benefits including more positive working relationships.

"The successful introduction of 5S has freed up space for other business activities—something which has a real value but is often not recognised."

Mick reported on the other tangible benefits :

- ◆ **The Value Exchange Performance had generated the same volume output with fewer hours worked**
- ◆ **Forecast production volumes were being achieved**
- ◆ **Rejects and accident rates had reduced ahead of target**
- ◆ **Lower absence level targets are being achieved**
- ◆ **Energy requirements were down due to staff 'owning' energy saving measures**
- ◆ **The operation was up on budget with reduced stockholding**

Mick stressed that Lean was a continuing journey and Marshalls West Lane was already planning to:

- ◆ Have a day reviewing strategy, the vision and mission statement
- ◆ Introduce PMO and BIT level 2 and continue with level 1
- ◆ Train in - Kaizen, Value Stream Mapping and Total Productive Maintenance

On behalf of all the visitors on the day, Yorkshire Productivity would like to thank all of the staff at Marshalls for a fascinating event.



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