



Case Study

Promo Leather — Lean not just for large companies

Desktop
Accessories



Promo Leather

As its name suggests, **Promo Leather** operates in the promotional goods market, primarily creating craftsman-worked leather goods for individuals, professionals and corporate organisations.

Based in Oldham, Promo Leather offers a wide range of items finished in various materials. Its staff have a unique knowledge of working with these materials, gained from years of experience.

This allows Promo Leather to create exceptional quality goods for some of the most demanding brands in the market – names such as Mulberry, Timberland and Filofax.

The business also creates custom designed goods, made to the customer's own specifications and needs. Items can even be personalised with the company name and logo, or even individual names or initials.

For further information on Promo Leather's range of products and services:
Email: sales@promo-leather.com
Web: www.promo-leather.co.uk



Lean associations

The principles of lean manufacturing will probably always be associated with the huge manufacturing operations who pioneered their introduction.

Toyota and other mass manufacturers, were amongst the first to benefit from the drive for lean efficiency.

Since then 'lean' has been adopted and adapted by many European companies to drive improved competitiveness through increased efficiency.

Lean manufacturing is an approach for providing products that a customer requires on-time, of the right quality, at the right price, in the right amount, whilst achieving profitability and continually reducing costs.



Forward thinking

This approach is just as relevant to forward-thinking small companies as it is to multi-national giants.

Anne Maher, Managing Director of Promo Leather, described how she came across lean.

"As a relatively small company, I often look around for external support and resources to help improve our business," said Anne.

Golf
Accessories



"This is how I came across the subject of lean manufacturing and considered the potential benefits this could bring to our operation."

Promo Leather has some distinct advantages over its larger rivals in the competitive promotional goods market.

It has a small but skilled workforce, capable of producing quality bespoke items in large and small quantities.

Most of the goods produced involve the use of treated leather. This is bought in, then cut, shaped and glued.

According to the particular product and job requirements, at the next stage, it is then often bound, embossed or silk-lined.

This can lead to a large number of highly-individual, relatively-small scale production runs.

"Efficiency is important to us at Promo Leather. We need to work smarter and more efficiently to compete effectively with our larger rivals," explained Anne.

Credit Card &
Cheque Book
Holders





"Better skilled learners means better business!"

Lean training

Yorkshire Productivity became involved in helping to train workers at Promo Leather to adopt new techniques and practical business practices.

With a large number of different jobs going through production, one of the first areas to be tackled was the stock of raw materials.

All raw material stocks are now clearly marked so it is now much easier for anyone to find the required items. This is already helping to save time in the stores area.

Lean NVO

All eight Promo Leather shop floor staff, including all team leaders and operatives, are doing a Business Improvement Techniques (BIT) NVO.

The BIT NVO is effectively an NVO in 'lean'. It is about improving a business' performance by following lean techniques.

From the company's viewpoint this can result in:

- A more positive working environment
- Improved workplace safety
- Reduced productivity costs
- Improved product quality
- Better standards of customer service
- Shorter delivery lead times

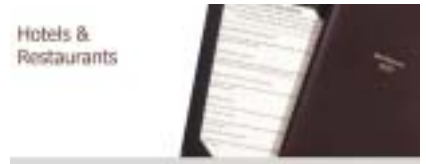
From the learners' viewpoint:

- There are no age restrictions or previous qualification requirements
- The learner works with an assessor who is only interested in how the learner performs on the job
- The assessor is there to help and work with the learner
- It is a national qualification equivalent to 5 GCSEs

Yorkshire Productivity's current work with Promo Leather is regularly scheduled to fit around the company's requirements.

Learners are more than half way through the NVO syllabus – having studied health & safety, visual management, team working, 5S and Kaizen.

The benefits of 'visual management' are already starting to become apparent.



Initial benefits

'Visual management' teaches the importance of workplace/workstation organisation and how visual aids and signals can help streamline processes and communications.

It explores a variety of efficient, self-regulating and worker-managed visual controls such as Kan Ban cards, colour coding and transportation route designators, lights and visual cues.

One of the most obvious aspects of the implementation programme is the newly painted floors and identified walkways.

Promo Leather staff have been studying 'problem solving' as an NVO option to help the team react and resolve issues more quickly and successfully.

"Team working has improved and organisation is much better," said Anne.

"We have better production planning than before and so will be able to cope and take advantage of the uplift in business much more successfully."

"Lean is definitely not just for the multinationals!"

The benefits of implementing 'lean' are already becoming apparent in the improved layout and organisation of the operation

BEFORE



AFTER



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