

# ONLINE EXCLUSIVE: ODG: Systematically Building on Lean Foundation

*Lea Tonkin, editor in chief*

Fostering active employee involvement in an informative lean training program contributes to organization-wide understanding and progress at Ontario Drive and Gear (ODG). The company is a leader in amphibious all-terrain vehicles (ATV). It encompasses two divisions, the Vehicle Division and the Gear Division, both in New Hamburg, ON. ODG serves ATV, military, off highway, construction, agriculture, automotive and other markets.



*ODG employees built a plastic foam 'Lean House' to gain greater understanding about lean tools and concepts.*

"We focus on highly interactive lean training where participants actually assemble a plastic foam 'Lean House,'" said Angelo Esposito, manager of quality and operational excellence. ODG's training program covers lean basics, 5S, Total Productive Maintenance (TPM) and employee involvement, followed by standardization and A3 problem solving. The house-building exercise creates understanding about lean as a system, with the foundation and various components working well together. Esposito will be a presenter during the [2012 AME International Excellence Inside Conference Oct. 15-19 in Chicago](#).

This training approach enables participants to clearly understand how a lean system is created and implemented, Esposito said. "Daily management of our process is important to us," he said. "We have more than 1,000 part numbers to track. We can make as few as one piece or as many as 50,000 pieces of any part or assembly per year."

Operator involvement in day-to-day improvement activities enables the company to achieve continuing improvements in leadtime, factory setup times and eliminating wastes in all areas of the operation, said Joel Wright, general manager. "Their understanding about lean, including the tools or elements such as standardization, problem solving and 5S (and how each one supports the other) contributes to built-in quality, just-in-time delivery and continuous improvement," he said.

No single tool or process can boost overall performance, Wright emphasized. For example, employees will benefit from problem-solving training at a particular time. As they gain experience using this tool, they will employ standardization and other concepts in step-by-step progress. "All of these improvements are people-centered. People are the value-adders." ODG encourages employee engagement and accountability through daily management reviews, daily planning meetings in each plant area and monthly "town hall" meetings.

Asked about lean implementation "lessons learned," Esposito and Wright suggested:

- Focus on foundational elements of lean, a systematic approach for eliminating waste and ensuring top-down, bottom-up alignment.

- Create understanding of what a lean system is about — a business within the business.
- Train operators and encourage involvement to drive improvement.
- Use key performance indicators (KPIs) and implement effective measures by operators through the daily management process to positively affect performance.
- Develop a creative work environment where people aren't afraid to make mistakes; you learn by doing. Provide engineering support on the floor.
- Use internal training resources as well as community college or other external resources.

Leadership behaviors are critical to implementing lean methodologies. "Leadership, as well as standards and processes, are essential in creating a lean culture," Esposito said. "In our training courses, we emphasize standards for leadership and processes. We are building a cooperative culture where all employees are a team. Everyone's behavior affects our ability to roll out systems for eliminating waste and providing a better working environment."

"We still have a long way to go," Wright said of OGD's lean improvements. "It's a never-ending journey we started in 2009. Thanks to our improvements so far, the business has grown close to 70 percent without needing to add 70 percent more people, floor space or machines. We are learning to do more with less." Employees continue to target better performance in leadtime, setup and waste reduction.

### **More Conference Highlights**

Conference attendees will gain insights about world-class improvement concepts in six presentation value streams:

- Leadership, Change Management, Culture
- Fundamentals of Lean (Manufacturing, Six Sigma)
- Sustaining Lean & Delivering Results (Lean Champion, Lean & Green)
- Collaborative & Innovative Lean (Benchmarking, Consortium, Supply Chain, Lean Product Development, Customer Relations)
- Lean Beyond Manufacturing (Office, Health Care, Transactional, Public Sector)
- Overcoming Obstacles to Lean (Showstoppers).

"You Say Lean; I Think Change: Simple Tools to Help Your Team Become Excellent at Change" will be discussed by speakers from W.L. Gore & Associates. Attendees at this session will participate in a series of facilitator-led simulations designed to provide a clear understanding about how to lead a lean transformation.

The roster of inspiring, innovative conference keynote presenters includes Mark Kelly, husband of former U.S. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords; Mike Abrashoff, author of *It's Your Ship*; and Jason Jennings, author of *Think Big, Act Small* and *Hit the Ground Running*.

### **Workshops: Practical Improvement Counsel**

For practical "lessons learned" about enterprise excellence, attend the conference workshop sessions. Robert Burke and Pat Lucansky of Value Innovation Partners will facilitate a "Lean Business Simulation" workshop. In this perennial session, through a series of facilitator-led simulations, participants will experience the fundamentals of change management as a mock lean transformation. Attendees will gain a first-hand view of how to set a baseline, identify key improvement areas to achieve goals and create/implement world-class metrics. "This workshop reflects a participative style, providing attendees a clear understanding of how to lead a lean transformation," Burke said. "Our approach allows participants to apply the tools they learn, helping them to gain experience and build confidence." He added that the session will meet the needs of novices and intermediate participants.

A broad range of additional workshop sessions awaits conference attendees. Presenters and their topics include Brian Maskell, "Solving the Standard Cost Problem;" David Mann, "Creating a Lean Culture;" Don Guild, "Virtual Pull;" John Kravontka, "Building Blocks for Equipment Reliability;" and Rich Gildersleeve, "Lean Product Development Using A3 and the DJO Way."

There's no substitute for a personal encounter with excellence at work, as reflected in the popularity of conference plant tours. The lineup of tour sites includes S&C Electric Company, two Caterpillar sites, Ace Metal Crafts, Winzeler Gear, Bison Gear & Engineering Corporation, Whiting Corporation and Bimba.

*You'll find conference registration and program information at [ameconference.org](http://ameconference.org).*