

Putting the Spark into High Voltage Manufacturing

With a series of Production Managers coming and going from the business, Andy Dobson was the only constant over an 18 month period; ensuring a niche electronics manufacturer not only increased their on-time delivery, but grew by over 55% to become a leading player in the high voltage sector.

Background

This company had been acquired by an entrepreneurial investor as part of an MBO/MBI involving the existing management team.

The intention was to modernise what had been a cottage industry and grow/acquire before exiting.

Their Issue

Having dismissed the previous Production Manager, Applied Kilovolts needed to stabilise Operations, improve On Time Delivery (OTD) and recover staff morale.

Andy Dobson was contracted to resolve these issues in the interim while Applied Kilovolts recruited a new full time Production Manager.

Once they found their new Production Manager, Andy had to return following a period of poor performance, with failing deliveries and increasing stock-holding. The company was in danger of becoming insolvent and running out of money.

Andy recovered the output by short interval control. He focussed on day-to-day outputs, reviewed and reset forward purchasing plans, got the company back to profitability and increased output to a record £340k/month by the end of this period.

Andy then took 3 months to attend Cranfield University, learning about Lean Thinking and how to apply it.

When he returned to the business Andy set about implementing Lean techniques to the existing process; moving operations towards make-to-order; using visual management and developing mass custom models.

Andy worked with external customers and suppliers to streamline Supply Chain and reduce costs as well as working capital.

Lean4Business' Solution

Andy turned around the business following periods of poor performance and the departure of previous post holders (twice!). He drove output through focusing on bottleneck(s) and process Failure Mode Analysis(FMA).

Andy reviewed and re-configured the Enterprise Requirements Planning (ERP) system from 1st principles: He rewrote Bill of Materials (BOMs), timings, structures, phantoms, backflushes etc. and went on to train staff in the day to day maintenance of the system, re-organising roles, recruiting staff, auditing and consolidating sub-contractors.

Andy instigated visual management to track products through the factory; he worked with sub-contractors to streamline order flow and deliver product in time with main production. He adopted a customer facing position with its largest clients, resolving supply issues and working directly with the biggest client to ensure deliveries to schedule. He also coached key stakeholders in basic Lean techniques; Visual Management, 7-Wastes, Right-First-Time, Flow and TOC.

On a Health & Safety note, Andy also implemented a lead-free soldering/process and moved the business towards RoHS compliance.

Ultimately with all of the improvements and attention to detail that Andy brought to Applied Kilovolts, the business moved from turnover of £2.9M-£4.5M/pa during the 18 months Andy was there, positioning the business to lead the high voltage market and in doing so keep 40+ people fully employed.

Testimonial

"We used to struggle to get £240k/month out the door, we've just done £375k and we are asking when we will do £400k!"

- M.D. Applied Kilovolts.

Specialist Expertise in Manufacturing Process Improvement

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