

LeMaitre Eliminates Excess Space, Time and Materials | Case Study

Client

› **LeMaitre Vascular.** Founded in 1983 by vascular surgeon, George D. LeMaitre, MD, the company reported 2008 net sales of \$48.7 million, up five-fold from 2000. Its 212 employees make and sell vascular devices and implants used in arteries and veins outside of the heart. Over the past 11 years LeMaitre has completed 10 acquisitions.

Challenge

› Eliminate excess time, space and materials from production lines, while simultaneously improving quality and gross margins. Successfully integrate acquired product lines into the company's headquarters facility in Burlington, Mass.

Solution

› Launch an ongoing series of kaizen events that leverage a unique culture that embraces change and gives team members the tools to transition from batch production methods to one piece flow. Embed a mindset of continuous improvement.

Results

Double-digit reductions in lead time, ongoing quality improvements and a continuous improvement culture that drives progress throughout the company.

A Manufacturer of Vascular Devices and Implants Enhances Quality and Margins By Integrating Lean and Continuous Improvement Into Corporate Culture

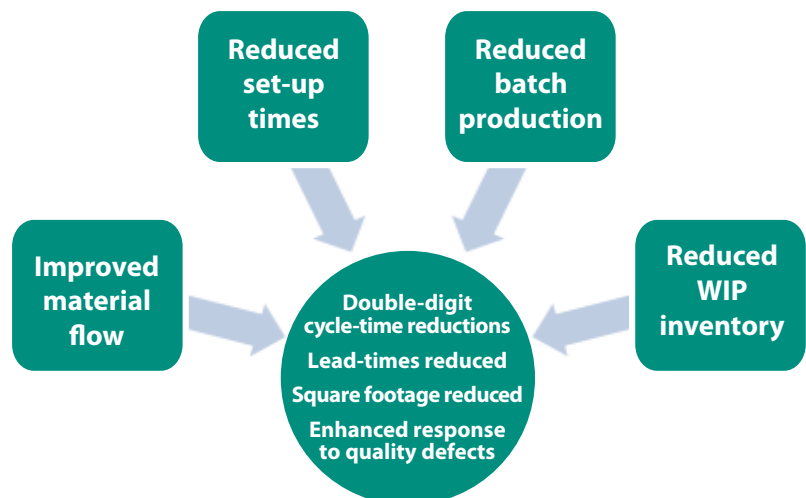
Based in Burlington, MA, LeMaitre Vascular (pronounced "Le-MATE") develops, manufactures and markets medical devices for the treatment of peripheral vascular disease. Employees assemble most products in a 6,500 sq. ft. ISO Class 8 clean room. When TBM Consulting Group formally introduced the company to lean concepts at their first kaizen event in September 2004, they didn't start in a distant corner of the facility.

"We felt that if we were able to apply lean manufacturing principles to our biggest product line, it would produce the greatest results. So that's what we did," recalls Trent Kamke, senior vice president, operations.

At the time the company had been struggling to integrate the operations of a French company that it had acquired. After transferring production to Burlington, they weren't achieving the targeted build rates or first-time quality and, worst of all, they were barely making enough product to satisfy demand.

For this reason, most LeMaitre products, with the exception of some custom-manufactured stent grafts, are built to stock. "Having product always available and not back-ordered is critical," says Kamke.

Results of First Kaizen



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In addition to meeting market demand for that product line, the results of the first kaizen event set the stage for further consolidations of a high-volume product line, which improved gross margins and profitability. It relocated consolidated production operations to Burlington without adding any additional square footage.

Having manufacturing at the same site as the R&D group gives them the opportunity to work in the clean room with operators when launching new products, which contributes to superior product designs that are easy to assemble and yield higher initial quality.

A culture that embraces change

LeMaitre has taken the lessons they've learned in the production areas and applied the kaizen process to other areas of the business. They've used the methodology to make shipping, order entry and customer service more efficient. More efficient order-entry processes have freed up people to spend more time on sales support, which contributes to the top line.

Kamke says that a robust incentive program that features cash, gift cards, flat-screen TVs and other prizes, has helped motivate people to respond and adopt process changes more quickly than they might have otherwise. Recognition is awarded by line or manufacturing cell based on productivity, time to build, quality and scrap rates.

"We were able to successfully consolidate a high-volume product line and produce results beyond our expectations, which allowed us to bring in additional operations and further improve our gross margin and profitability."

— Trent Kamke,

Senior Vice President, Operations,
LeMaitre Vascular

About the TBM Medical Products Practice

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