

CASE STUDY

Garment Maker Uses Operational Excellence to Improve Delivery Time

Ropa Sieta Leguas Embraces Operational Excellence to increase weekly output by 65 percent with minimal investment in assets. Frees up capacity and improves competitive position against low cost providers.

Client

A privately owned manufacturer of blue jeans for clients in the United States, Europe and Asia with weekly unit output of 190,000.

Challenge

A traditional batch producer was no longer competitive after the entry of lower-cost Chinese producers into the market. Demand was growing, but they were unable to spend the time or money to physically expand operations and hire new people without having to raise prices—thus risk losing business.

Solution

The company streamlined operations by switching from batch production to one-piece-flow. This opened 2,800 square meters that could be used to expand operations and reduce production costs by 21 percent.

Results

At the time of this case study, the company was selling 65 percent more units per week than it was the prior year and expectations were for another increase of 30 percent in the next 12 months.

The lean work began with an assessment of operations using a value-stream management tool to measure performance.

Key Findings

Delivery time
identified as top metric to improve.









Demand
fell into 12 segments, which were designated as value streams/cells.

The improvement team chose a pilot line to begin the kaizen-driven transformation from batch to one-piece-flow and set a delivery time reduction goal of 40 percent within three months for all lines.

“It’s completely different. Now people have a target, a challenge. Before they just produced.”

— Pablo De la Torre
Engineering Director, Ropa Siete Leguas

Performance Measures		
Metric	Goal	Actual
 Delivery Time	↓ 40%	50%
 Quality	↑ 99%	99%
 Inventory	↓ 50%	53%
 Productivity	↑ 40%	55%
 Liberated Area		2,819 square meters
 Cost Reduction		21%

Improvement exceeded goals in delivery time, quality, and inventory reduction and productivity.

Training

Each week, the team held kaizens within each value stream, setting up a new process based on takt time, one-piece-flow and pull systems. The outcome was standardized work and operators who could perform multiple tasks, which helped with flexibility.

Additionally, TBM trained leaders on a lean-for-growth strategy using a simulation. “This allowed them to understand the type of leadership required in a lean environment and how the lean tools enable growth,” said Jose Soto, the TBM consultant who worked with the company. “The simulation demonstrated what happens when a plant moves from a state of chaos to a state of Operational Excellence.”

Sustainment

The increased worker engagement that the new team-based culture created was essential to sustain the improvements achieved. Two keys to engagement are an improvement in safety (incidents reduced by 50 percent) and implementation of a management system, which ensured adherence to goals shift-by-shift. Already, turnover dropped 80 percent.

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