



There has been a quantifiable change in shop floor staff culture.

Motorhome builder enjoys lean manufacturing efficiencies

TALVOR Motorhomes is an affiliate of Apollo Motorhome Holidays and the largest leisure vehicle manufacturer in Australia. Established in 2005, the company has grown significantly since its inception to become a market leader in building functional, quality and compliant vehicles for use in the rental or retail environments. The

fleet of recreational vehicles built at Talvor's Northgate facility in Brisbane's northern suburbs, encompasses vehicles from two to six berths, catering to markets from the cost-conscious backpacker to top-end luxury.

In 2007, Talvor Motorhomes implemented a new high growth strategy which included significant production increases and presented enormous challenges to the business. Their charter was to increase production targets with a relatively small workforce, whilst maintaining high standards in vehicle quality and customer service. How would this be done?

The Improve Group, a Competitive Manufacturing Training and Implementation Provider, was invited to consult with Talvor Motorhomes and provide coaching in the Certificate IV in Competitive Manufacturing.

This would be their introduction to "Lean" manufacturing and lean processes.

'Excellence coach' Kevin Condon was given the task of coaching the team of production leading hands and in-house trainers to success.

"When I started working with the team they were initially hesitant about the training program and the concepts of lean manufacturing. After awhile, they began implementing their initiatives into the workplace and their work became easier and more efficient. Now the training team is the driving force at Talvor for the culture change of continuous improvement."

The first step was to ensure any changes were aligned with the strategic directions



The original 'bay' style manufacturing process.

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and objectives of the organisation. This was done by the team who worked with Talvor's management to implement a Balanced Scorecard business planning and management system. Kevin then steered the team-work with "5S" – a process that ensures work areas are systematically kept clean and organised, ensuring employee safety and providing the foundation on which to build a lean system. The 5S program includes Sorting, Setting items in order, Shining (cleaning), setting cleanliness Standards and Sustaining. This quick and easy starting point takes just a few hours to initiate and minutes per day to maintain. It's an important and crucial step that gives workers control of their own workspace and helps them focus on causes and elimination of waste.

The next course of action saw the teams take a closer look at the layout and design of their workspace, in particular their Euro Deluxe production area. With the company's increased production needs, the original "bay" style manufacturing process no longer complemented the workshop process and in fact, hindered production possibilities.

It was decided to convert the workflow from "bay" style to a "pulse" production line, a one piece continuous flow rather than a stop, start and move bay system. A U-shaped cell was used and a 1.5 day turnaround on each pulse instigated.



Excellence coach Kevin Condon.

At the end of each 1.5 day session, each vehicle moved forward one pulse. Work area layouts were also altered to include individual assembly areas and a boom crane was installed to handle the large fiberglass wall and roof sections. Following the introduction of the pulse system, the most dramatic changes and production



The 'pulse' system makes production a one piece continuous flow.

increases occurred. The Euro Deluxe vehicle production increased from four to 15 vehicles per month, a 375 percent production increase! Furthermore, assembly hours were reduced by over 35 percent.

Talvor Motorhomes business manager, Paul Truman, says "The training team has embraced the concepts of problem solving and implemented a number of mistake proofing initiatives which have improved efficiencies and reduced defects in their manufacturing processes.

The capacity increases were required to support our customer, and this program provided tools to assist and drive this objective. There has been a quantifiable change in shop floor staff culture. The leadership and facilitation skills developed through the program, has given them the confidence in their abilities to make a difference. They are now able to mentor and support current and new staff through a "continuous improvement culture".

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