



Lean Office

What is Lean Office ?

Although office and administrative activities account for about 60% of the cost in most manufacturing organizations and up to 80% in administrative service organizations, these areas are often overlooked during lean initiatives. In order to benefit from a lean approach within any company, office activities must fully support manufacturing operations and core service value streams to eliminate waste and improve flow. A Lean Office approach is exactly aimed at this.

Lean Office, a methodology developed by Stanwick, optimizes these administrative processes so that they require the absolute minimum resources to fulfil customer expectations. The Lean Office approach guarantees increased office output, an improved information and knowledge flow, higher customer satisfaction levels, reduction in errors and more balanced activities, making the office processes more effective & efficient.

As in any lean initiative, involvement of the workforce is of crucial importance, but at the same time difficult. Successfully doing so however will make results viable & provides a foundation for continuous improvements as employees will commit themselves to new ways of thinking and working!

Issues that can be solved using the Lean Office methodology:

Examples of some recently completed projects by Stanwick gives an idea about the effectiveness of the Lean Office methodology :

- Streamlining the front & back office sales processes of a major automotive supplier, in order to provide the customer with an accurate quote and commitment of possible delivery date.
- Lead time reduction of the application & approving process for mortgages within a leading financial institution.
- Reorganisation of the end of month closure activities in the finance department within a major plastics manufacturer in order to provide the headquarters with timely & accurate information.

How to implement Lean Office ?

Stanwick uses the following roadmap to help companies in streamlining their administrative processes:

1. Define value from your customer's perspective
2. Understand the value stream
3. Eliminate the deadly wastes
4. Meet customer demand
5. Make the work flow
6. Balance the workload
7. Continue to improve

Fundamental in any lean initiative is to find out what the customer really wants. Voicing out the need of customers into performance indicators for services might not prove to be the most easy task. However it is crucial for future success and should happen with the necessary caution.

Second cornerstone of any lean initiative is the elimination of waste. Waste is the enemy, it prevents us from providing the customer what he or she really wants and is willing to pay for. In every process, manufacturing or administrative, waste exists. The challenge lies in identifying what waste looks like and how to eliminate it.

The systematic elimination of waste starts with mapping the value stream. A value stream consists of all the steps, value added and non-value added (waste), which are required to bring a product or service to the customer.

After mapping the value stream, one can determine where the best opportunities for improvement are, based on the identification of wastes and create a future state or roadmap for improvements.

Typically there are nine wastes in an office environment. For example, when a quote is received with incorrect information, it creates correction waste, because additional time is now required to obtain and correct the information. Another waste is called overprocessing, like re-entering the same data in multiple applications. Next to these, we also identify overproduction, inventory, waiting, motion, transport, focus and information waste.

Every office has the potential to achieve effective, efficient and waste free flow throughout all of its processes. However, doing so requires deliberate efforts and hard work!

Learning to see waste and ensuring, once identified, that elimination follows is key to success. Mind that there is a vast difference between 'elimination' and 'reduction'. Only effective waste 'elimination' and relentlessly doing so will lead to long term sustainable results!

The Role of Stanwick in the implementation of Lean Office:

Stanwick's Lean Office approach has been developed to assist business with their lean transformation, providing them with the necessary know-how, tools and techniques, not only focusing on the hard side, but even so on the soft side to facilitate the change required to realize sustainable results.

Stanwick gives in-house training and assists companies as a facilitator in the implementation of the Lean Office methodology and principles in their organisation.

What are the results you can expect from the implementation of Lean Office ?

Stanwick has supported valuable projects for its customers with improvements from 20 to 70 % both in cost and throughput time in administrative services in an industrial context and banking environment.

Lean is a mindset !

Lean is a 'mindset' or a way of thinking as opposed to a tool. Many get this wrong referring to the Lean methodology as if it were something that can be bought off the shelf and applied. Once understood that Lean is a 'mindset', it becomes easier to conceptualize that it can be applied to any type of business or area within a business. You cannot use traditional management thinking and then apply Lean like an emulsion across the organization.

Some recent client engagements in Lean Office:

Dexia Bank, La Mondiale, Panasonic, Prévoir, Schneider, Swedish Match.

Stanwick Management Consultants, your partner in organisational & operational excellence.

Stanwick is an independent management consulting firm that supports companies to achieve business excellence by improving their organisational and operational performance. We have offices in Belgium, the Netherlands, France and China.

The aim of our customers, active in industry, as well as in services and public sector, is to excel in bottom-line results, employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and the impact on society. Stanwick's mission is to help them to achieve these goals through its in-depth expertise, by creating a close partnership and through continuous support to the organisation as a whole.

As a partner on the way to excellence, we develop a tailor-made approach with the appropriate tools together with the customer. We put a lot of emphasis on implementation, leading the process of change and getting sustainable results. We have in-depth knowledge in both organisational and operational excellence.

Our team consists of 35 full-time consultants with very different backgrounds ranging from engineers and psychologists to economists and sociologists.

Contact us to find out how we can support you in your way to excellence.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for discussing how we can help you in your lean journey. Sample cases and a select set of training modules are available upon request for your evaluation.

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