

Applying Lean Principles In a Research Lab

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Client Challenge

When a research lab faced the possibility of having its services outsourced by its organization's management, it asked RWD to help review its operations and suggest Lean improvements. Customer service complaints were common. The lab had poor communication with its clients. It suffered from long process lead-cycle times. There was difficulty meeting schedules. And there was no standardized process. With the help of RWD's Lean expertise, the lab hoped to reduce lead time by 30 percent, increase throughput by 25 percent and improve on-time performance by 50 percent.

Our Approach

Working with lab personnel, RWD used value stream mapping to clearly define the current state of the lab's operations. Through the use of swim lanes and spaghetti diagrams, the RWD/lab team was able to drive analysis down to the process and procedure level, identifying gaps in performance and providing opportunities for improvement. Each of these opportunities led to the development of performance standards that could be measured in order to drive continuous improvement.

Our Solutions

As a result of the joint effort of the research lab and RWD, several key benefits were achieved:

- On-time delivery was improved by 46 percent, close to target.
- Lead time was reduced to nine days, an improvement of 41 percent, outperforming the goal.
- Sample handling was reduced by 15 percent