

Lean Production Implement Model for Aerospace Manufacturing Suppliers

Hsien-Ming Chang, Chikong Huang, and Chau-Chen Torng

Abstract—Aerospace industry is a value-added and technology integrated industry. The aerospace manufacturing suppliers have to coordinate the demand of quality, delivery, cost and flexibility of aircraft to achieve customer satisfaction. This study integrates the lean concepts and summaries the Lean Cycle for lean implement and practice, and also develops the Lean Production Implement Model to strengthen the competitiveness of the manufacturing suppliers in the aerospace market.

Index Terms—Aerospace, lean production implement model, lean cycle, manufacturing suppliers.

I. INTRODUCTION

The aircraft industry covers the scope of civil aircraft, military aircraft and aircraft maintenance...etc. The main aerospace manufacturing companies (Tier-1) keep the high value-added and technical-intensive activities in house, such as design, final assembly, flying tests and marketing...etc. And offload the low value-added and labor-intensive production activities to aerospace manufacturing suppliers (Tier-2, Tier-3...), such as detail part fabrication and aero-structure assembly...etc. The global supply chain of aerospace is then constructed and organized.

The aerospace manufacturing suppliers provide the hardware (aircraft, component, spare, AOG (air on ground) parts...etc.) and software (design, service, logistics, NC program...etc.) to their customers. Due to the aerospace manufacturing suppliers provide the products to satisfy the demand of main aerospace manufacturing companies, so the customer satisfaction is the fundamental requirement of suppliers to keep long-term relationship and obtain stable, enough business from main aerospace manufacturing companies.

The goal of enterprise can break down into four categories:

- 1) Delivery: Plan the detail production schedule and control the production progress, from design, engineering, tooling, detail parts to assembly stage, and delivery products on schedule.
- 2) Quality: Construct the qualified and stable production system to produce the products within the required specification of customers.
- 3) Cost: Built the products in a competitive cost and obtain the reasonable profit for enterprise to play an important role in the supply chain.
- 4) Flexibility: Due to the market and production line are dynamic and fluctuated, the aircraft manufacturing

suppliers have to construct the ability to absorb the fluctuations and risk.

II. LEAN CONCEPT

Lean principles are the mechanism for process improvement developed by Womack and Jones based on the original work done by Ohno of the Toyota Motor Corporation to optimize production by eliminating waste. Toyota settled on an effective strategy [1] based on: Kanban-based pull production, eliminate waste, faith in the value and importance of quality, continuous improvement, belief in the value and utilization of human resources, reducing setup time for machines, integration of suppliers and material acquisition and efficient, cellular layouts with balanced material flow. It has four defining characteristics: waste awareness, continuous quality assurance, just in time and level production [2], [3].

During the 1980s, the Institute of the Automobile at MIT did a comprehensive study of manufacturing processes in the automobile industry. This project and the concepts developed within the context of this initiative were documented in the book "The Machine that Changed the World [4]. One of the major ideas was developed as part of this work was called Lean Production. Koskela discussed the concepts of Lean Production in a report generated at Stanford University in which he coined the term "Lean Construction." [5]

In the early 1990s, the aerospace company which is the focus of this study initiated a lean approach to production using Kawasaki Production System [6]. Boeing introduced Lean Manufacturing in 1997. It succeeded to construct moving assembly line in 1999 at Long Beach Plant by building 100-seat 717 aircraft [7]. Boeing 747 final assembly line introduced moving line technology in 2001. The results presented highly optimized production flows and processes, reducing cost and flow time from the traditionally 24 days to the targeted possible 18 days [8]. Lockheed Martin applied lean techniques to the F-16, F-22 and C-130J in 1999.

Lean implementation is therefore focused on getting the right things to the right place at the right time in the right quantity to achieve perfect work flow, while minimizing waste and being flexible and able to change. Apply the Lean Production can eliminate the waste of production operations and business processes. Remove the redundant operations and processes to reduce the cost and increase profit [9].

The lean concept not only can apply in the production process of aerospace industry, but also in the business process. Especially for aerospace manufacturing suppliers, they have to reduce their cost to increase their competitiveness.

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Hsien-Ming Chang is with the Yunlin University of Science and Technology, Taiwan (e-mail: g9321809@yuntech.edu.tw).

III. LEAN CYCLE

The concept of lean production is continuous improvement. It is a long-term journey and efforts.

The lean cycle combine and link the Plan-Do-Check-Action (PDCA) cycle, show as Fig. 1.

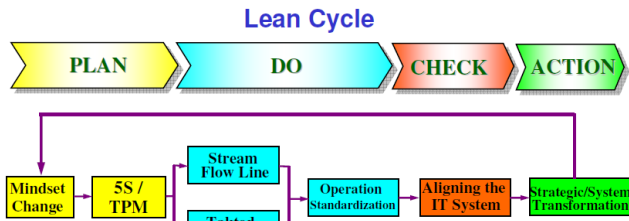


Fig. 1. Lean production cycle.

A. Plan Aspect

1) Mindset change

The company awareness and mindset change are the most important for the lean implement. There are many different functional groups in aerospace manufacturing suppliers, including design engineering, production engineering, production control, parts fabrication and component assembly...etc. Those functional groups should change their mindset and stereotype to remove interface barrier within the organization. All departments align the same goal and target to achieve the overall benefit of enterprise.

The key issues of mindset change describe as follow:

- Top management commitment is the key successful factor for improvement activities. All improvement ideas need the support from management to become activities and obtain benefits.
- Leader Lead Lean (3L) is the current concept for lean improvement. Due to the management level has more resources, authorization, information, and judgment ability, the management level lead the lean improve can get quick and more results.
- 7 wastes include defects, overproduction, transportation, waiting, inventory, motion, and processing.
- 7 ways are the methodologies to inspire and encourage creativity to generate multiple solutions to meet a customer needs.

2) 5S/TPM

Manpower and machine/facility are the key elements for the shop floor of aerospace manufacturing suppliers. The 5S can ensure the employee disciplines and accountability. The TPM can secure the machine availability and utility. Those two factors can support the steady and smooth production in the shop floor.

The key issues of 5S/TPM describe as follow:

- Visual management: include supermarket, Kanban system, and color code control. These tools help the first line supervisor and manager to find the bottleneck and critical area for improvement.
- Machine availability and utility/Overall equipment efficient (OEE).
- Tracking and evaluation mechanism
- Autonomous Maintenance
- Focused Improvement
- Education and Training
- Planned Maintenance

- Quality Maintenance
- Early Management and Initial Flow Control
- Safety and Pollution Control
- Administrative and Office TPM

The example of TPM for machine maintenance concept shows in Fig. 2. The original concept was starting repair after machine breakdown. The current concept is operators do the fundamental maintenance of their own machines; observe the vibration and the noise of the spindle in daily operation. Also measure the dimension/key characteristics from the production parts. Once they found any error or abnormal message, then response to maintenance department for repairing. Also the maintenance engineer monitors the spindle life, machine accuracy. And prepare the key spare parts of machines. Thus, it help to reduce the machine down time, and increase the machine availability and utility.

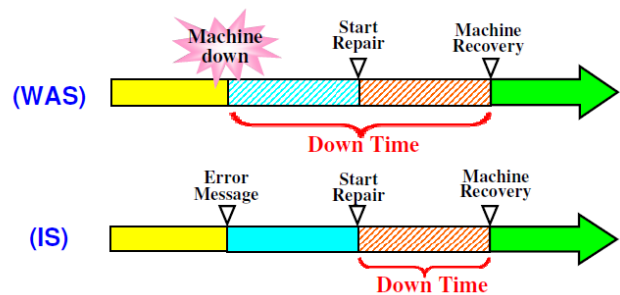


Fig. 2. The TPM for machine maintenance concept.

B. Do aspect

1) Stream flow line/ takted assembly line

The main products of aerospace manufacturing suppliers are detail parts and component assembly. The machine/facility of parts fabrication line should follow the process sequence to construct the stream flow line. The rhythm and assembly progress should base on the requirement of production rate and takt time to arrange the number of manpower and assembly jig.

The concept of paced production line shows as Figure 3.

The warehouse setup the supermarket to release the raw material (plate, metal sheet, tube and composites preprag) to part fabrication, include machine, sheet metal, tubing and composite shop uniformly and sequentially. These flow line of parts fabrication shop pull and produce the raw material into required dimension, contour and function, and then flow to surface treatment for coating and painting. These parts go to kitting center and ready to supply the kitting board to assembly line follow the production rate and takt time. The assembly activities include drill, rivet, and seal. Design a moving line to combine and link those operations together.

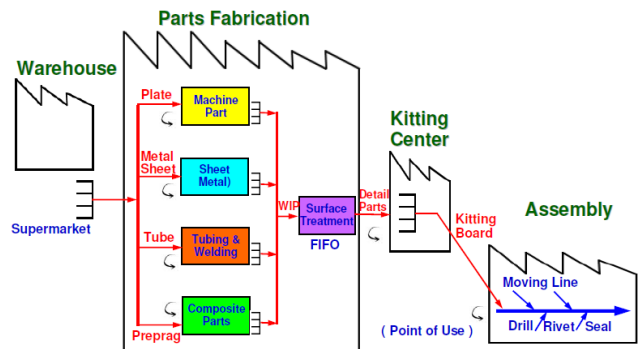


Fig. 3. The concept of paced production line.

The key issues of stream flow line/ takt assembly line describe as follow:

- Work load leveling helps to construct a steady and stable production line.
- One piece flow in part fabrication line.
- One kit flow in assembly line.
- Facility/equipment layout should follow the work and process sequence.
- Synchronize production flow
- The multi-skill employee keeps the flow line flexible to overcome production fluctuation.
- - Abnormal warning: Utilize the equipment, such as Andon, to warn the abnormal or line stop issues. Quick identify and fix the trouble of production.
- Automation
- Error detection and proofing

2) Operation standardization

It is important to standardize the process/operation after improvement/lean activities. Thus, the improve result can be kept and embedded into the system. The aerospace manufacturing suppliers have to consider those improvement ideas how to apply to another/wider fields to enlarge the improve benefit.

The key issues of operation standardization describe as follow:

- 4M (man, machine, material, and method) determine the quality of processes and products. If we can find the better/right process or production parameters of 4M and firm fix those combinations, then we can obtain the reliable products.
- Process capacity
- Standard work combination table
- Visual aid and work instruction can help the operator manufacturing complicated parts in an efficient way.

C. Check Aspect

1) Aligning the IT system

The production cost control is critical to evaluation the gain or loose of different program. The working-hour collection of each ship-set aircraft number will be monitored and compared with the value come from learning curve.

Once the working-hour of process or machine was improved by lean activities, the improve results (standard working-hour, lead time, transportation, space, downtime...etc.) should revise in IT system.

Also the lean implement office will monitor the long-term implement trends to ensure the lean activities have been follow-up and flow down.

The key issues of Aligning the IT System describe as follow:

- Production control information system
- Key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Update the schedule parameters: include lead time, working hour.
- Shop floor control information
- Visibility

The concept of production scheduling system shows as Fig. 4. The system will compare the demand and supply and come out the feasible detail schedule of each detail parts and end item.

After the improvement of lean activities, the update

schedule parameters (include lead time, working hour...etc.) will input into the production scheduling system after verification. So the IT system can reflect and keep the current and latest competence.

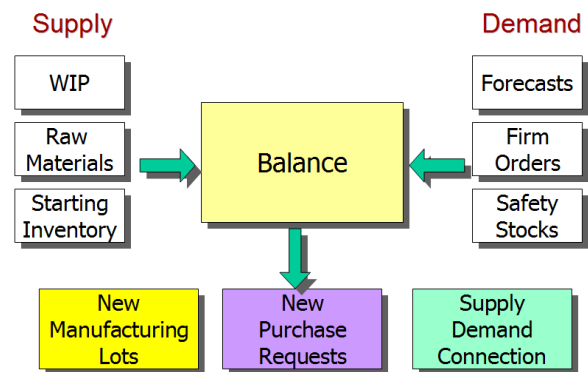


Fig. 4. The Concept of Production Scheduling System.

D. Action Aspect

1) Strategic / system transformation

After the team work of lean activities, the work definition, process, interface of each functional group will be changed. The process flow/layout may change after value stream mapping and shop floor simulation. The management philosophy may change after the team brain storming and several times simulation. So after the lean cycle, management should consider the Strategic / System Transformation:

The key issues of Strategic / System Transformation describe as follow:

- Organization and functional group integration to reduce the interface and barrier.
- Personnel training: include on-job-training and multiple skill training.

The example of lean improvement for machined part assembly shows in Fig. 5. The production control prepares the work-in-process in the kitting cart base on the demand of next process/customer. The multiple-skill operator picks the part up, seal, press, and put into the oven for curing through 7 ways analysis and simulation. The transportation distance, working space, manpower and the production lead time can be reduced.

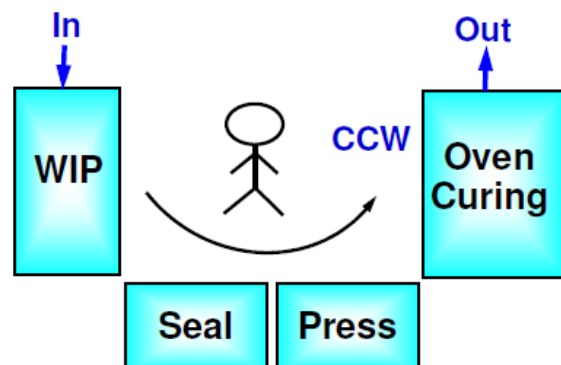


Fig. 5. The Improve of machined part assembly.

IV. IMPLEMENT MODEL

The Lean Implement Model includes four categories (human resources, machine, method, and process). Through the continuous lean cycle, the scope/level of lean topics and

environment will become wider/higher than before.

The Lean Implement Model shows as Fig. 6.

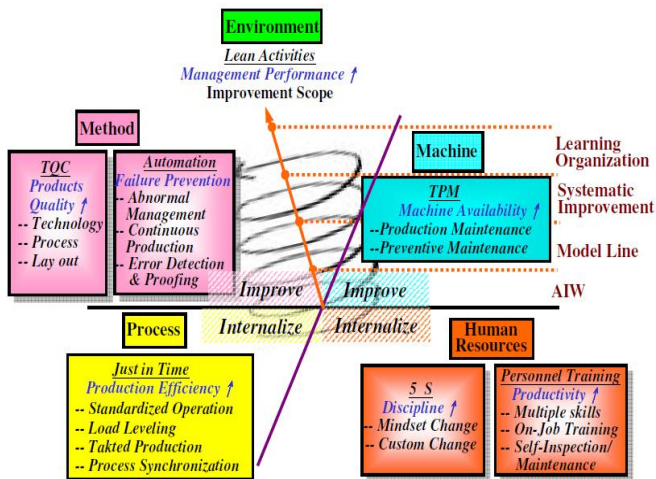


Fig. 6. The Lean implement model.

A. Human Resources

The domain of human resource is the fundamental and initial for lean concept implement. The 5S and personnel training are two major factors.

1) 5S

5S is an internalize process during Lean Production implement. The goal of 5S implement is to strength the employee discipline and enterprise culture through organizational awareness and involvement.

The detail items include:

- Mindset change
- Habitual behavior change.

2) Personnel training

Personnel training is an internalize process during Lean Production implement. The goal of Personnel training is to strength the employee productivity and accountability through training.

The detail items include:

- Multiple skills
- On-Job Training
- Self-Inspection/ Self-Maintenance

B. Machine

The domain of machine plays the main role of production shop floor. The TPM is the major responsibility for the daily operation of machine operator and first line supervisor.

1) TPM

TPM is an improvement process during Lean Production implement. The goal of TPM implement is to strength the machine utility and availability.

The detail items include:

- Production Maintenance
- Preventive Maintenance

C. Method

The domain of method is critical for the quality and cost for the end product. The TQC and automation are two major approaches.

1) TQC

TQC is an improvement process during Lean Production

implement. The goal of TQC implement is to strength the products quality and reliability.

The detail items include:

- Technology innovation.
- Process planning.
- Lay out planning.

If the concept of "Design for Manufacturing" was apply in design and planning stage, it will get more benefit from downstream improvement.

2) Automation

Automation is an improvement process during Lean Production implement. The goal of Automation is to strength the failure prevention.

The detail items include:

- Abnormal Management
- Continuous Production
- Error Detection and Proofing

D. Process

The domain of process influences the results and performance of management. The Just-in-time concept should apply in production line.

1) JIT

JIT is an internalize process during Lean Production implement. The goal of JIT implement is to strength the production efficiency and performance.

The detail items include:

- Standardized Operation
- Load Leveling
- Taked Production
- Process Synchronization

E. Environment

The development of lean implement will request by prime aircraft manufacturing company. They will coach and evaluate the lean implement about their component and want to reduce the purchase price after cost down.

1) Lean activities

The Lean activity is a step-by-step and spiral upgrade process during Lean Production implement. The goal of Lean activity implement is to strength the management performance of enterprise.

The detail improvement scopes include:

- AIW (Accelerate Improvement Workshop)
- Model line
- Systematic improvement
- Learning organization

The lean production implement is a long-tern journey and efforts. Through the top management commitment and companywide involvement, the resources can be aligned and focused. The ultimate goal of Lean Production Implement is try to construct the learning organization and achieve the continuous improvement. Thus, the aerospace manufacturing suppliers can increase their competence in the competitive market.

V. CONCLUSION

This study integrates the lean concepts and summaries the Lean Cycle for lean implement and practice, and also

develops the Lean Production Implement Model to strengthen the competitiveness of the manufacturing suppliers in the aerospace market. The conclusion describe as follows:

The lean concept not only can apply in the production process of aerospace industry, but also in the business process. Especially for aerospace manufacturing suppliers, they have to reduce their cost to increase their competitiveness.

The concept of lean production is continuous improvement. It is a long-term journey and efforts. The lean cycle combine and link the Plan-Do-Check-Action cycle.

The Lean Implement Model includes four categories (human resources, machine, method, and process). Through the continuous lean cycle, the scope/level of lean topics and environment will become wider/higher than before.

The Lean activity is a step-by-step and spiral upgrade process. The goal of Lean activity implement is to strength the management performance of enterprise.

Through the top management commitment and companywide involvement, the resources can be aligned and focused. The ultimate goal of lean production implement is construct the learning organization and achieve the continuous improvement. Thus, the aerospace manufacturing suppliers can increase their competence in the competitive market.

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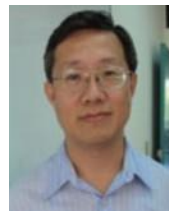
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Hsien-Ming Chang received his PhD degree on Industrial Management from the Yunlin University of Science and Technology, Taiwan, ROC in 2012. He got a Master Degree in Industrial Management from Yunlin University of Science and Technology in 2002 and a Master Degree in Material and Manufacturing Engineering from the Feng-Chia University in 2004. He spends the majority of his professional career in production and management of aerospace industry.



Chikong Huang got his PhD Degree on Industrial Engineering from the University of Texas at Arlington, Texas, USA in 1991. Currently, he is a Professor in the Department of Industrial Management, National Yunlin University of Science and Technology, Touliu, Taiwan, ROC. His researches are focused on facilities planning and design, production and operations management, and logistic planning and design.



Chau-Chen Torng received a BS Degree from National Tsing-Hua University in Taiwan, a MS Degree from Auburn University, and a PhD from Arizona State University. Currently, he is a Professor in the Department of Industrial Management at National Yunlin University of Science and Technology, Touliu, Taiwan, ROC. His research interests include quality management, reliability analysis, and applied statistical methods.