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Cycle Time Reduction Boosts Productivity, Profitability

More, better, faster. The mantra of modern manufacturing becomes an attainable goal with the principles of cycle time reduction (CTR).

Reducing your cycle time — the start-to-finish period required to manufacture an item — is not a matter of speeding up your current operations. CTR creates speed by finding smarter ways to work. It boosts productivity and profitability by streamlining the manufacturing process while maintaining or improving quality.

CTR tracks the progress of the product, not the activities of people. People may be very busy but if their activities add no value to the product, their efforts do not contribute to a rapid cycle time

Eliminating Waste

One of the key goals of CTR is the elimination of waste — of either effort or materials. Waste can be found in a step that adds no value, duplicates effort, or delays production. Or it can lie in the inefficient use of space or the creation of excess inventory.

Valuable weapons in the war on waste are the standards of flow manufacturing, linking processes sequentially to move components from one stage to the next in logical order, synchronizing materials and labor.

Since flow uses visual cues to pull production forward to the next ready workstation, it eliminates backups of work-in-process that can come when production is pushed forward from the rear.

Reducing Complexity

Just as important as the elimination of waste in CTR is the reduction of complexity — unnecessary steps, parts, or options in the production process. To tackle this problem, CTR uses the techniques of cell manufacturing, grouping related activities using similar products, parts, and assemblies close to each other on the shop floor.

Organizing work into production cells streamlines schedules, eases supervision, and reduces movement of materials and finished products. It also reduces the number and variety of parts needed and allows the consolidation of suppliers.

The potential payoff for a successful CTR effort includes lower production and inventory costs as well as higher employee productivity. The ultimate arbiter of marketplace success — customer satisfaction — can be expected to climb, too, as you are able to do a better job in meeting delivery schedules.



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