

To continually examine our processes to provide greater value to our customers without waste.



The Lean Line

Making the Call



Grunau has been focusing on improving material handling and communication throughout 2009 and has realized some success.

OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFIED

Beginning in January, we held discussions to identify opportunities for improvement with material handling. After investigation and a few time studies, we discovered that the amount of time spent waiting for material at supply houses can be reduced. To take advantage of the opportunity, Grunau embarked on educating workers to improve communication between our employees and the supply houses, as well as improving the daily task planning process.

CALL AHEAD

We asked our employees to call ahead for all orders so the supply house can check stock and compile the order.

- Checking stock reduces the number of times drivers arrive at a supply house and realize the required item is only available through special order, or the supplier had just run out of what was needed.
- Calling ahead allows the supply house time to compile the order beforehand, reducing the amount of time we need to wait for material.

IMPROVEMENT SAVINGS

By calling ahead, the supply houses obtain improvements in their counter times and have more time to check order accuracy before we arrive for pick up. The improvements with Grunau employees' task planning and communication has cut the amount of material handling time spent at supply houses in half. We've set a goal of 3 - 5 minutes to collect material at supply houses depending on will-call counter traffic. Our employees have proven this amount of time is achievable since 50% of the visits are currently 5 minutes or less. We have measured the reduction in "wait time waste" as a cost savings of \$12,000 in six months since we began the process.

Lean success was realized through identifying a problem and formulating a solution through education and improved communication. This activity is an excellent example of how improvements can be made while working with outside organizations to identify a better way that benefits everyone involved. If you would like to share a successful project or have a Lean idea, please contact a member of the Grunau Lean Team Steering Committee.

