



Is Lean Manufacturing Your Untapped Advantage?

By Robert Holley

Manufacturers around the world are under pressure like never before. Rising input and labour costs, supply chain volatility, sustainability demands, and relentless customer expectations mean one thing: do more with less. For many, Lean Manufacturing isn't just cost-cutting - it's a survival strategy.

Originating in the Toyota Production System, Lean is a proven, structured approach to maximising customer value by eliminating waste. Its true power lies in its mindset: empowering teams to do more with less, through continuous improvement, deep workforce engagement, and a laser focus on customer value.

Why Lean, Why Now?

Cost pressures: Energy, materials, and wages are rising.

Supply chains: Disruptions demand resilience and agility.

Speed & quality: Customers expect faster delivery, higher quality, more customisation.

Sustainability: Reducing waste supports environmental goals and stakeholder expectations.

Lean isn't theory - it delivers. Manufacturers have cut changeover times by 50%+,



maximised equipment uptime, unlocked annual labour savings, and improved OEE from ~40% to 70-80% through smarter line design, better visibility, and team-led problem solving. Workforce engagement strengthens through visual systems and daily performance management. These outcomes recur across consumer goods, automotive, aerospace, and electronics.

What Does Lean Actually Do?

Five principles: Define Value; Map the Value Stream; Create Flow; Establish Pull; Pursue Perfection.

Practical tools: 5S, Value Stream Mapping, SMED (rapid changeovers), Kanban, and Root Cause Analysis. These tools don't just tidy up operations, they release hidden capacity and build team capability.

Adoption Trends

- Now mainstream in FMCG, pharma, electronics, and beyond.
- SMEs use Lean to stay competitive and manage rising costs.
- Lean underpins Industry 4.0 by improving processes before automation.

ERA's Perspective

At ERA, we believe Lean is a critical lever for operational excellence and cost optimisation - and it's about people, culture, and sustainability. We help clients move beyond short-term cost-cutting to build agile, resilient operations that thrive in today's unpredictable world. If you'd like to discuss how Lean could apply in your organisation, we're happy to start that conversation.

Get in touch for a free Lean Opportunity Assessment.