



# **This Is Not Your Father's Lean Manufacturing**

Phil Centonze  
Managing Partner, POS-IMPACT LLC  
[phil.centonze@pos-impact.com](mailto:phil.centonze@pos-impact.com)

Lean manufacturing is traditionally considered an approach to improving operations on the factory floor. No longer should it be confined only there. Non-production areas are equally critical in delivering value to customers, and deserve continuous improvement attention.

“Office” type activities, from request for quotes, to engineering design, to order receipt and entry, to release to the production floor, can typically consume more time than actual production. Unfortunately, we often are unable or unwilling to recognize the process-nature of non-production business processes as a priority for improvement. We continue to endure and work-around office inefficiencies, despite the essential dependence of production on pre-production functions. Why? Primarily because the flow of information in the office is not visible as is the flow of material in production. Therefore, we generally neglect to study, measure, and improve office processes.

Lean manufacturing is a proven means for reducing cycle time and cost by eliminating inefficiencies and process waste. We must make non-production processes visible. One way to do this is by using the Value Stream Mapping tool to help us “see” material and information flows, and opportunities for eliminating waste.

A key understanding is that “process is process”, that is a series of activities that consume resources to create a service or product of value to a customer. Lean manufacturing concepts and tools can and should apply to all business processes, regardless whether the result is information or a tangible product. In this way, we can ensure continuous improvement throughout the company as we strive to minimize waste in meeting customer requirements.