

New Touch benefits from LYNX

New Touch Laser was formed in 2001 with the commencement of their Bayswater laser cutting facility and has become a premier one-stop laser cutting and metal fabrication jobbing shop in Victoria. With one laser processing machine at the time, Brad Drury worked long hours to build the business up covering sales and customer service activities during the day with machine operations at night to ensure delivery commitments were met.

BY MICHAEL BARKER

Today, New Touch employs 45 staff, operating over three shifts at three facilities - being Bayswater and Clayton (laser cutting) and New Touch Fabrication, also located in Bayswater. The Clayton operation was specifically set-up to handle the higher volume, longer running jobs with Bayswater focussing on the lower running jobs.

In 2008, New Touch Laser identified an opportunity to undertake continuous improvement activities at the Bayswater laser cutting facility stemming from a shift in customer order patterns where the demand for short run jobs and reduced lead-time was growing at an alarming rate. This shift had resulted in inefficiencies that needed to be addressed due to their impact on Customer delivery performance.

Through their strong connection with AMTIL, New Touch Laser was presented with an opportunity to take part in the LYNX Project Factory Blitz and in fact were the first company to take part in the program.

The project kicked off with a best practice review that was undertaken by Deloitte on behalf of AMTIL where industry experts visited the Bayswater site and conducted a detailed analysis. This resulted in a comprehensive report that identified the business and operation opportunities for the company.

Improvement opportunities identified included:

- General operational waste removal
- Lead-time to customer
- Review and streamlining of the Quality System and paper-work flow
- Streamlining of operating procedures in place
- Reduce production downtime
- Increase productivity
- Performance review process
- Increase sales – (this would be an outcome of the activities)
- Increase customer referrals
- Improve customer satisfaction
- Review of KPIs
- Improve visual shop floor control
- Review of non-conformance reporting process
- Improve profit margins

On meeting with Brad, we agreed that the primary focus for the Factory Blitz would be on the identification and reduction of factory downtime, to remove waste and increase throughput that will flow to improved delivery performance to customers. Quality performance was also identified as a focus area for the blitz.

The approach taken was to communicate the project to all on-site staff and outline the specific objectives for the coming 12 months. A communication board was erected in the factory where all information collected was on display for all to see.



The activity commenced with the Managing Director and the LYNX consultant undertaking a time study of work practices over the three shift operation, so early starts and late nights. The results of the analysis dictated the course for the coming 12 months. The review identified 29 different opportunities for improvement with the focus being placed on the top 10 root causes for downtime.

The next step was to form cross functional focus teams to investigate and report back their findings. The focus teams comprised:

- Material Handling
- Programming, and
- Quality Systems

Each focus team was appointed a leader who was responsible to arrange the appropriate team members, organise and run the weekly meetings and report back to the other teams as well as presenting results to staff at monthly review meetings. The results coming for the team activities demonstrated an immediate trend in the right direction and the following key performance indicators were achieved over the course of the project:

- Delivery Performance
 - 35% improvement in line items despatched on-time
 - 25% improvement in jobs despatched on-time
- Delivery Lead-time
 - 64% reduction in delivery lead-time to Customers
 - 40% increase in deliveries made within agreed lead-time
- Product Quality
 - The Blitz has enabled NTL to consistently achieve their demanding internal and external quality targets

These results were achieved without any increase in labour or additional capital equipment. New Touch Laser has since employed a QA & Special Project Manager to work closely with staff to identify and implement continuous improvement activities.

An outcome of the Factory Blitz was Brad Drury and Alex Vandenbroeck teaming up to form New Touch Fabrications. This has enabled New Touch to respond to customer demands who were looking for more than just laser cutting. New Touch can truly claim to be a one-stop for metal processing requirements.