

SLOW, STEADY APPROACH MUSHROOMING INTO SUCCESS



Frank Moscone in the growing area.

Kanban system to trigger the next label order.



When Frank Moscone, owner of All Seasons Mushrooms in Alberta and B.C., heard about lean management, he was immediately interested in using it to continuously improve his company. But knowing how difficult change is, Moscone didn't jump right in. Instead, All Seasons Mushrooms is implementing lean thinking slowly, ensuring that everyone from senior management to front-end staff is engaged in the program and committed to its success.

"It involves such a change, in people and culture," says Moscone. "You're getting people to reinvent themselves."

Lean is a management method in which companies continuously focus on processes, expose issues and opportunities, and make improvements. It boosts business performance, using simple practical tools and techniques to enhance quality, cost, delivery and people contributions. Its success requires that all employees be on board with the program.

The first step in achieving engagement is ensuring that those at the helm understand and support the initiative. Moscone and the rest of All Seasons' management team attended workshops and thoroughly explored the lean program before making a decision on implementation.

"We wanted to satisfy ourselves that we were sold

on the concept, because without that, it isn't going to go anywhere," says Moscone, who believes that, in today's competitive marketplace, businesses must think lean in order to survive.

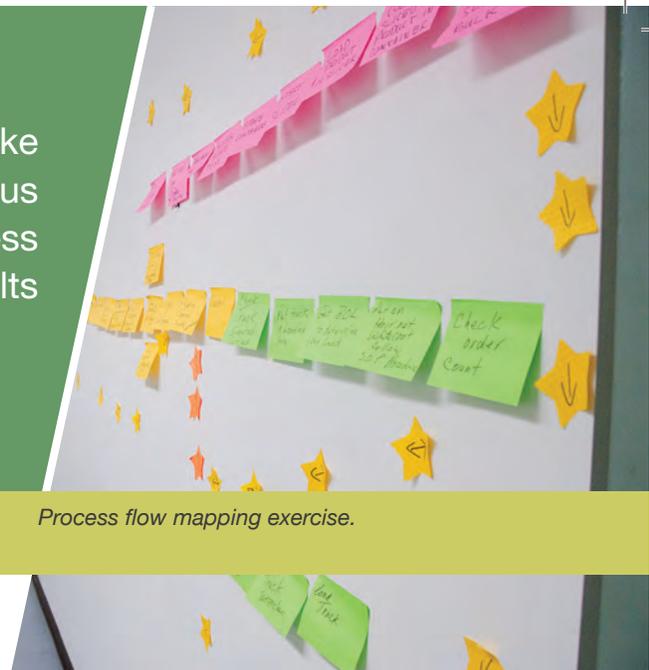
With the senior team behind the initiative, the next step was to talk to staff at the Crossfield facility to let them know that the company was about to set out on the lean journey and to introduce them to the concept.

Over the past months, All Seasons has sent some people to workshops organized by Alberta Agriculture and given the majority of staff in Crossfield an introduction to lean through an online program. A lean steering committee that includes representatives from various departments has been formed, and it will be responsible for prioritizing initiatives and developing plans for the next three and six months.



Visual management - floor outlines and hanging signs.

Through its programs, ARD supports companies like All Seasons, and the key staff charged with continuous improvement responsibilities, to learn, plan and progress their lean thinking implementation and generate results more quickly.



Process flow mapping exercise.

“There is an adage that our most important resource is our people, and we want to demonstrate that,” says Jim Suydam, manager of the Crossfield facility, about the formation of the steering committee. “This allows the people who actually do the work to exercise their creative abilities and to drive the changes.”

After approximately a year and a half of exploring and beginning to implement lean and continuous improvement, All Seasons hasn’t yet seen substantial financial benefits, but that doesn’t concern

Moscone. He’s buoyed by what he has seen—signs that people are engaged and that the culture is shifting. People are using the language, talking about tools like value stream mapping, which brings non-value-added activities in a process to light, and 5S, a tool used to organize the workplace. There is more teamwork, and change is beginning to happen.

Moscone believes that All Seasons will see significant improvements in productivity as they continue, but he’s not setting targets.

“I don’t want to prejudge the program, and I think the steering committee has to be involved in defining the goals,” he says. “For me, this is a better way to work. It will make people’s jobs easier and I hope more fun, and the company will do better. That’s what it’s all about.”

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) has a number of initiatives in place to help agri-food processing companies interested in lean and other productivity programs.

For more information visit: agriculture.alberta.ca/productivity

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