

## Leaning towards utopia



While many may view printing as a craft, and there's nothing wrong with that, the reality is that to make that craft profitable it has to be treated as a manufacturing process.

Printing involves the processing of data via a series of standardised steps that include raw materials to produce the finished product to a standard, timeframe and price for a client. These steps include sales, administration, planning, estimating and customer service, prepress, printing, post-press, despatch, fulfilment and warehousing. All these processes must work in sequence in order to produce the finished goods in time, to standard and within cost.

But when it comes to trying to streamline the business (and who doesn't want to achieve that!), most people looking for efficiencies have a narrow focus usually centred around the printing process because it's the highest priority and most expensive cost centre. But that's not the complete solution—particularly if all the other processes involved remain unchanged.

The best optimised press is wasted in an environment where all the other components of the manufacturing process—from sales through to delivery and invoicing—are not similarly optimised. Consequences can include production bottlenecks caused by the constraints of any or all of the other steps in your existing processes.

Globally, companies are awakening to the realisation that the fix for this lies with lean manufacturing because it

engages the entire workforce (including the boss) in identifying the value-adding processes and eliminating waste at every level. This includes wasted material, wasted effort and time, and wasted energy. In fact any use or loss of resources that does not lead directly to creating a product or service is considered to be waste.

### ■ Lean & Green goes national

How to achieve this has sat in the 'too hard basket' for most, but that's about to change with a printing industry specific process, Lean & Green, launched nationally by *Printing Industries* in conjunction with its partners, ATS and SkilledForce.

Lean & Green combines the traditional definition of competitive manufacturing (Lean) with the Sustainable Green Print (SGP) components of environmental waste such as eliminating energy waste and toxic emissions. It can be taken as a package combining SGP training to Level 2 certification or, if an environmental certification has been achieved, as a standalone Lean program. It's a win-win for printing businesses, particularly since they may also be eligible for significant government funding incentives.

Already the Sydney-based Lindsay Yates Group and TMA Group of Companies have completed Lean training and are benefiting from their increased competitiveness and efficiencies. They can boast support from some 115 employees who have taken the Lean journey and achieved a nationally accredited Competitive Manufacturing qualification at either a Certificate Three or Four.

These companies have become more productive and have staff who are consciously contributing to making the businesses better having improved their own skills and

There isn't a company in the industry that can't benefit from reducing costs, increasing profits, improving customer service, enhancing quality, having a better trained and focused staff, and demonstrating a commitment to environmental sustainability. A printer's utopia? Yes and it's achievable. Joe Kowalewski explains how.

Joe Kowalewski

confidence. Not every individual makes it through; Lean is an arduous process that sets high standards and has expectations which can be challenging

unless you are willing to give it your full commitment from the highest levels of management and through all levels of staff.

But it is a managed process. Participants are guided through every step and on-site instruction is an integral part of the process and can be tailored to suit shift requirements and minimise existing production schedules. *Printing Industries* already has a further 12 companies undertaking Lean & Green in Sydney and in Western Australia with a total of 530 staff in training. Major announcements are expected during August as industry companies get on board to reduce their costs, maximise production throughput, improve financial performance and increase customer satisfaction.

It's a process that, because of its vastness, takes time. Two years is not unrealistic, but the results begin producing benefits much earlier and act as an impetus for everyone involved to follow through to the end.

If there is a printer's utopia, then this may be the route to get there. For more information, contact Ian Walz on (02) 8789 7362. Email: <ian@printnet.com.au>.

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### Free guide to terms of trade

The September edition of *Printing Industries* VIP Member Update will include a free 14-page Best Business Practice Guidelines for Terms and Conditions of Sale.

The guidelines contain more than 30 topics that printers can draw on to help create a personalised conditions of trade document that clearly states their trading terms taking into account the significant changes in technology.

It covers claims and claim periods, job cancellation, content and refusal of work, creative work, materials supply, damages/limitation of liability, job delivery, estimates, experimental and preliminary work, warranties and indemnities, finance charges and collection costs, insurance risk of loss, mailing lists, overs, unders and spoilage, payments, prepress and proofing, and production schedules. The guide is a PIA (USA) supplement to *Printing Industries'* existing Recommended Terms and Conditions of Trade.