

Case Study 6

A manufacturing project

A project conducted for British Biocell International

When I first started to work with British Biocell (BBI) they were a typical small company that had grown out of an R&D background. They had an excellent, if mature, product range made with great care by a highly dedicated team of people. They had recently moved into a new venture developing and making rapid, immuno-assay tests on an OEM basis.

When I arrived the first thing that struck me was that the whole place looked like a big R&D lab. There was no stock control and no concept of work flow though the factory. Indeed I had a hard job convincing them that they ran a factory.

They were certain they had run out of space and could not see how to move forward with growing their new manufacturing business.

Working with a local training provider the first step was to arm the shopfloor with some improvement tools. We did this using the BIT NVQ model. Our first success was then a big 5S exercise. Now, at least we could see we had some space. This was quickly followed by establishing a stock control system. As in most businesses the 80 -20 rule applied with 20% of the purchased items being used by 80% of the business. These became the core of the stock control system and were brought under control first.

There was ERP software already available so we used this to start monitoring stock transactions and were able to bring a lot of the stock under control quite quickly.

Attention was then focussed on the manufacturing workflows and building a team to execute the rapid test assembly.

Study of the work allowed the introduction of a cellular model with flexible teams of 5-8 people. One of the greatest "wins" we had was when one of the teams proposed changing from the conventional 5 day week to 4 longer days with staggered start (and finish) times. They had been studying their process as part of their BIT training and saw that even with the improvements they had made the set-up time each morning was still about an hour. They also realised that this did not need all of them. Their proposal increased output by about 20% for no increase in cost. Plus they got a 3 day weekend.

By the time the project was concluded BBI were able to comfortably make half a million tests a year. More importantly a base had been established from which they can continue to develop.