

What's Next for Lean Production?

The Manufactured Housing Research Alliance's (MHRA) Lean Symposium for Factory-Built Housing in January capped off a year-long effort working with nine plants to bring the fundamental principles of lean production to their facilities. By all measures, the symposium was a smashing success. During the symposium, each plant team showcased a sample of their accomplishments in a series of panel discussions. In



Dr. Darlene Williams of HUD spoke of PATH's commitment to supporting MHRA's lean initiative.



The Manufactured Housing Research Alliance (MHRA), the research arm of the manufactured housing industry, provides content for *Technologies*.

- *Technologies* highlights the research of MHRA and examines other research and development activities throughout the industry.
- For more in-depth information about research in the factory-built housing industry, or to find resources mentioned in *Technologies*, visit the MHRA Web site.



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the words of Lamar Dickerson, director of lean manufacturing for Southern Energy Homes, Addison, Ala. and one of the presenters, "I really enjoyed hearing all the experiences of the team leaders, the successes and some failures, learning curves, figuring out the do's and the don'ts. I couldn't help but get excited listening to every one."

Another presenter, Mike Lombard, continuous improvement manager for Palm Harbor Homes, Plant City, Fla. said, "Among the speakers at the symposium, there was a consensus that lean factory-homebuilding is potentially the best solution to fulfilling housing needs. Overall, the symposium was an encouraging experience. I came away feeling that more and more people are beginning to understand the potential of lean production in our industry."

In addition to the plant representatives, three keynote speakers addressed the symposium. Dr. Darlene Williams, Assistant Secretary for Policy Research and Development of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, noted the tremendous potential that lean production techniques have to boost the already exemplary effi-

ciency and quality of factory-building operations. Keith Holdbrooks, president and CEO of Southern Energy Homes, Inc., and Woody Bell, president of manufacturing for Palm Harbor Homes, shared some of their insights into lean production and how it is changing their approach to factory-homebuilding.

TECHNOLOGIES has chronicled a number of lean activities conducted with the nine homebuilding plants MHRA worked with in 2006, starting with the April 2006 training program for plant representatives and continuing with the intensive program of rapid

What is Lean?

Lean production is a manufacturing methodology originally developed by Toyota that strives to eliminate all kinds of waste (time, money, materials, etc.) while developing a culture within the plant that strives for continuous improvement. Lean processes have long been used in other industries, notably automotive, to improve quality while reducing the overall cost of production.

process improvement (RPI) events in their facilities, and finally the January symposium (see the MHRA Web site for photos, presentations and other information from the symposium www.mhrahome.org/pages/lp). At the symposium, MHRA also presented its next series of lean programs available to the industry.

New Programs Available

In 2007, MHRA is offering both basic and advanced training workshops and other lean support services for modular and manufactured home producers. MHRA lean training provides a practical approach to applying lean methods. It emphasizes actual applications—not just concepts—using plain language, with factory-building examples and step-by-step methods for implementing lean production processes.

MHRA lean training is intended for companies interested in quickly moving up the learning curve and benefiting from the experiences of other factory-homebuilders. It also is a unique opportunity to work with experts in the application of lean production to the factory-homebuilding industry. “Our philosophy is not to go into a plant, make some efficiency improvements and then leave, but to teach plant employees how to lead a lean transformation themselves” says Emanuel Levy, MHRA executive director. “Only then can the plant sustain and add to their gains and develop the all-important culture of continuous improvement.”

MHRA lean production programs are available to companies new to lean processes and those with some lean knowledge and experience. Both on-



Panelists took questions from the audience about implementing lean building techniques.

and off-site programs are available as well as custom programs (see sidebar). A complete description of the MHRA program along with registration information is available on the MHRA web-site at www.mhrahome.org.

R-Anell Housing Group, also one of the companies presenting at the symposium, is thoroughly committed to lean production. According to Dennis Jones, R-Anell’s president, “[the industry] can’t keep doing what we are doing the

same way that we are doing it today. Now I don’t know if lean production is the only way to get there. What I do know is that virtually every one of the greatest companies in the world think that it is and they are all doing it.”

For further details contact Jordan Dentz, MHRA’s lean program manager at 212-496-0900 x13 or jdentz@research-alliance.org. ■

MHRA Lean Programs in a Nutshell

Introduction to Lean Basics: Modeled after the original highly successful MHRA Lean Advocate training program, this one-week intensive off-site course provides a fundamental understanding of lean through classroom discussion, simulations, exercises and plant tours.

Advanced Lean Training: Focuses in depth on conducting RPI events, running in-house lean training programs and creating pull systems with kanban.

On-Site Lean Implementation

Support: Work with lean experts to implement lean techniques through on-site, company-specific lean activities, including value stream mapping and conducting RPI events.

Customized Lean Training: Basic and/or advanced lean training program customized to company specific needs and operations.

Executive Level Briefing: Private briefing focusing on the importance of supporting a lean transformation including a concise explanation of lean fundamentals, a brief history of lean and detailed examples of lean implementation results in factory homebuilding plants