

STAUFEN.

THE RIGHT DOSE OF LEAN



Originally founded as an electronics shop, the dosing technology specialist Saier has long produced its products more like a manufacturer. To exploit the full potential of a new production facility and an automated high-rack storage system, this family-managed company underwent a lean transformation with the help of Staufen AG. Managing Director Michael Saier, grandson of the founder assesses the results: "Set up the way we are now, we will dare to take on larger tasks."





COMPANY PROFILE

From electronics shop to industrial operation

Whether commercial dishwashers, pools or laundromat machines, Saier Dosiertechnik GmbH produces just the right products for supplying liquid detergents, etc. The product lines range from peristaltic dosing pumps and dosing systems to electronic control systems, plus corresponding data, cloud, and IoT solutions.

This middle-sized company, which is headquartered in Gundelfingen Germany (in Baden, near Freiburg im Breisgau), is proud of its tradition that reaches back more than 90 years; today, it is managed by the third generation of the family. Saier started producing peristaltic dosing pumps in 1970. Today, the company is one of the leading global suppliers of liquid dosing technology for chemical products. Increasingly, its products are getting smarter and they can be controlled remotely.

"About ten years ago, we began to introduce process-oriented workflows and quality management," explains Michael Saier. A new production facility, including an automated high-rack storage system, was dedicated in 2016, and the number of employees doubled to the 100 people the company employs today.

INITIAL SITUATION

Handling instead of value creation

Despite the new building and the introduction of an ERP system, production at Saier was still more like manufacturing. Therefore, the company set out down the path of Lean Transformation in 2019. The lean-experienced Managing Director Volker Brunner recognized that there was still significant potential in production. At the time, there were no standardized work systems that were attuned to the production flow, and assembly processes were subdivided into small, individual steps with large lot sizes. This resulted in long lead times, high circulating inventory, and an overloading of the automated storage system.

The employees were working "from the box to the box" without any transparency about order status and progress. There was a lot of unnecessary work due to the constant rearranging and shunting – handling instead of value creation.



Initial situation: Primarily seated workstations and lot-size production

PROCEDURE

Reduction of the lead time

In September 2019, Saier and Staufen began a lighthouse project. A product with 250 variants was selected and analyzed from the points of view lead time, value creation, and waste. It quickly became clear that the assembly times could be improved significantly with a modified work system. The employees worked with Staufen to design an optimized assembly line, which they enhanced in several stages until it became an integrated work system. Nearly all pre-assembly activities were chained and integrated into the new assembly system. The project took three months and was a great success. The core goal of significantly reducing lead times was achieved. Accordingly, flexibility could also be increased a lot. With the new system, order lead time was reduced by more than 70%, assembly time by 5 to 15%, and control efforts were also reduced. And the project's success can still be felt: greater transparency, better planning, and increased reliability and adherence to deadlines.

Encouraged by the experiences and results from the lighthouse project, Saier decided to roll out the optimizations all across its production. Production manager Andreas Sehringer: "This way, we used the special circumstances of the Corona pandemic to make a transformation in order to come out of the crisis stronger."

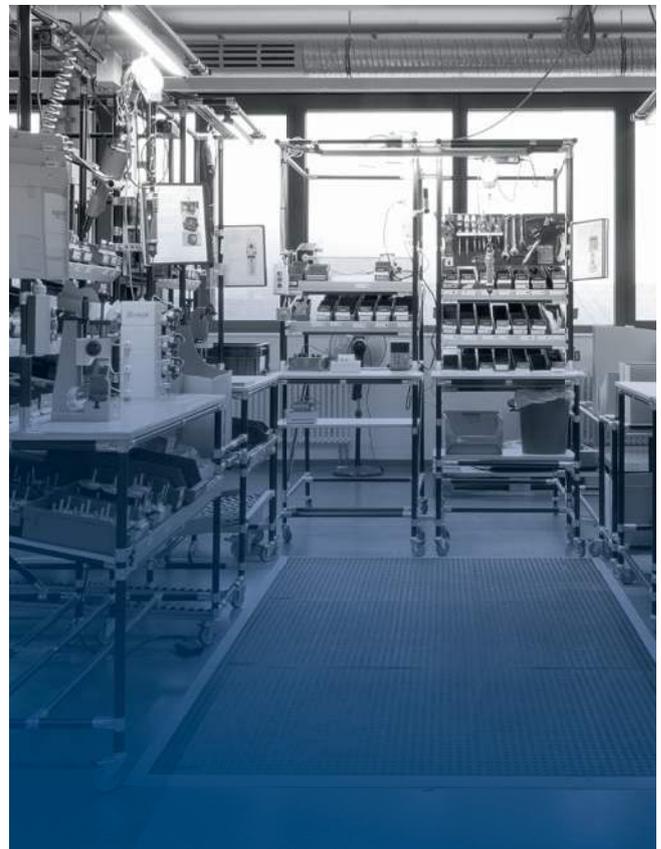
"At first, I was skeptical," admits Michael Saier. But the approach, which focused on having the employees design their working world largely by themselves, appealed to him. In the end, a data analysis made the decision: "I was truly shocked by the extent of waste and how many tasks that were actually unnecessary that our employees were performing."



Technical highlight: test station with in-line test concept

According to the principle of the "one-piece flow," a new, low-waste work system was also introduced for the production lines. Assembly was shifted from rigid workbenches to mobile carts. The first assemblies demonstrated that much less time was required since the component was only put down when it was finished. Today, the heart of assembly is a KPI cockpit. By assigning quantities, a goal is defined; if there are deviations, countermeasures can be taken right away. In addition, a visualization concept was developed and rolled out. This way, it is clear at a glance where deviations from the target process are occurring.

Resupply with components is ensured today by a two-stage storage structure with multi-container logic. This made it possible to simplify control and logistics tasks significantly and this with the same, stable material availability.



Adjustment of the workplace situation: Work systems are laid out according to the one-piece flow principle.

RESULTS

Sustainable change in the corporate culture

The Lean Transformation is a great success according to Saier. The changed material provision resulted in a reduction of picking work, fewer misbookings, and shorter lead time.

Assembly times were reduced significantly with one-piece-flow. In the future, the workstations will also be optimized constantly with regard to ergonomics (CIP). Defects are detected earlier and complaints approached according to a prioritization specified in advance. All employees are up-to-date with regard to order status. Completion on exact dates can be planned at last, delivery date adherence is the best in the industry (best-in-class), as prominent customers confirm.

"It's nice to see that the company management doesn't have to have all the good ideas and use all their powers to incorporate the employees," says Michael Saier. "We have changed our corporate culture for the long term and reoriented it. The whole team is now more motivated looking into the future."



The daily standing meeting with the production manager brings structure and measurability to the work system. The group leaders enter the KPIs each day; deviations are detected and countermeasures taken. This means that there is transparency at all times about the production quantity and disturbances in the process.

ABOUT STAUFEN

Inside every company, there is an even better one.
With this conviction, Staufen AG has been advising and qualifying
companies and employees since 1994. Around the world.

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200
Projects per year

17
Languages

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PUBLISHER

STAUFEN.AG
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Blumenstraße 5
D-73257 Köngen, Germany

☎ +49 7024 8056 0

✉ kontakt@staufen.ag
www.staufen.ag

CONTACT



Robin Schorn
Project Manager

kontakt@staufen.ag

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