



## **LEAN CASE STUDY:**

### **LEAN FOOD PROCESSING AT GORTON'S SEAFOOD**

**Looking at ways to eliminate waste using the same essential techniques to enhance flow that Taiichi Ohno invented fifty years ago.**

Lean Advisors Inc. has been conducting on-site practical Value Stream Mapping workshops at various companies throughout North America. Although much of the demand for Lean workshops comes from the traditional manufacturing industry, we are increasingly seeing a new trend where different types of organizations are adopting Lean principles as their main thrust to eliminate waste so that every step adds value in the customer's eyes. One of these forward-thinking companies is Gorton's. Gorton's produces seafood products such as fish sticks, portions, tenders, and the Filet-o-Fish for McDonalds. Most of the people at Gorton's have recently been exposed to Lean concepts and at every level from line associate to President, they are looking at ways to eliminate waste - using the same essential techniques to enhance flow that Taiichi Ohno invented 50 years ago. And not just on the production floor! Administrative departments and suppliers have caught the fever too.

Jeff Whiteacre, Operations, Value Stream Manager at Gorton's, has his hands full making sure that training gets rolled out, measurements are scrutinized to make sure they reinforce Lean behaviors, and helping to organize the many improvements that will be completed as a result of value stream mapping exercises. "We are very excited about the possibilities that we are starting to see to improve the flow of our products through our plants, as well as the flow of information in our support groups,"

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commented Jeff to a recent workshop group.

### **Drawing Current State Maps At Gortons**

As Gorton's found out, there are more similarities between food producers and parts producers than previously thought. Raw materials enter the value stream where a series of processes interact to add value to produce a food product for distribution across the country. The actual time spent adding value is small relative to the overall lead-time through the plant. Once the rate of customer demand is truly understood, then this knowledge can be applied with value stream analysis to the production floor, and the office environment to understand where waste occurs. Traditional information flows, driven by MRP, are much like in any other industry.

### **Developing A Future State At Gortons**

The concepts of flow that were originally pioneered by Henry Ford, and then refined by Taiichi Ohno can be applied in any situation where processes deliver a product or service to a customer. Gorton's will be working on their "space/time" equation so that people can work closer together, improve their communication, understand their value streams, and solve problems together. As an example, hundreds of feet of conveyor systems will be removed so that items can be packaged directly after processing. Gortons has already seen a significant savings go directly to their bottom line as a result of Lean. The people at Gorton's have taken a brave step in their start down the road to Lean processes. Their management is committed, they are getting the knowledge, and they are mapping their value streams and implementing improvements that will eliminate waste.