

We created production cells for simple design parts, moderate design parts, complex design parts, aluminum yokes, part assembly and very large parts; and we are now getting ready to add a composite materials production cell. As an added benefit, we reduced work handling over 50% in some cases, and we regained the use of about 25% of our plant floor space as a result of the new production cell layout. Within the office suite, we eliminated process hand-offs over 50% and reduced foot travel time over 20%.

We are now poised to expand in order to satisfy client demand while keeping sales lead times reasonable. It is funny how we sometimes have to take a step backward in order to make a realization and move forward again.

WIDE APPLICABILITY

Whether in a service industry, contracting industry or retail industry, the idea of taking a linear process and making it cellular works. As an example for a contractor specializing in the house of worship

market, consider one crew that handles all aspects of the project from start to finish. The completion of the project depends

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on the speed and skill of that crew in regard to all aspects of the installation. Now suppose these aspects run the gamut from equipment installation and hook-up (such as loudspeaker and video projector rigging, sound system tuning, video system convergence, signal distribution, a CCTV system, an equipment user manual, client training sessions) all the way to demolition and electrical work. One crew will have quite a challenge trying to handle all the elements of a job if they, and they alone, are responsible for the whole job from beginning to end. Certain aspects of the installation will be fast, while others may suffer inefficiencies associated with unfamiliar

territory for the installer.

In a cellular design, the contractor would build a central crew comprised of skilled specialists. The appropriate specialist would be sent to the project at the appropriate time, with the responsibility of handling his or her portion of the project. Not only will the speed of the installation be faster, the quality will be greater due to the specialized knowledge of the installers. If scheduled properly, these skilled task forces can accommodate more installations than would be possible if a linear installation crew was used.

Having recently experienced the rewards of making the commitment to change, I am now convinced that any organization of sufficient size to take advantage of the cellular business design will profit from it. **S&VC**

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