

An international benchmarking case study

A University benchmarking with a window manufacturer

A university in the UK needed to reduce costs for major building construction and maintenance projects due to funding shortfalls in the tough economic times. These were multi-story accommodation blocks with quite a number of rooms and hence involved considerable repetitive work. They asked whether Benchmarking providers knew any organisations that had achieved large and rapid cost savings. We knew that manufacturing companies had successfully applied what they call Lean Manufacturing for their repetitive production processes. This involved Collaborative Planning for production by different parts of the production process including design and use of what they call 5S to keep things on the site tidy and in order and to understand at a glance exactly what materials they had available for production each day so they didn't run short.

An example of the innovative collaborative planning workshop flipchart postings of activities against the project plan. Each trade had a different color post it note.



The University did benchmarking with a window manufacturer – one of their suppliers in fact – and learned how to reduce their construction costs, on-time delivery and reduce defects in their building construction maintenance works by over 40% .

Benchmarking Partnerships

Connecting Best Practices,
People & Ideas



The chosen winder manufacturer production layout:



They applied what is now called Construction Lean Improvement Program (CLIP) to their works and it was so successful that they now require all building contractors they use to be trained in the CLIP Tools and Techniques. One example of an improvement that the building workers identified was to use a cardboard template to mark out drill holes for awkward electrical fittings in each room rather than wire up the fitting, apply it to the wall, mark the holes and then unwire and remove the fitting, drill the holes and then rewire and finally apply the electrical fitting. This had to be done for each of 72 rooms.

Strategic Need – Complete the Building Works despite Funding Shortfalls to be able to attract new students and improve Revenue

Benchmarking Partners – not other Universities but Manufacturing

The Benchmarking topic – Cut costs of Building Projects already planned

Benchmarking Scope – How to engage the contractors and sub contractors to cut costs (what's in it for them), the Tools used by manufacturing sector to cut costs, best benefit for repetitive work due to accumulation of savings – this became the priority