

Continuous Improvement - The Corus Way

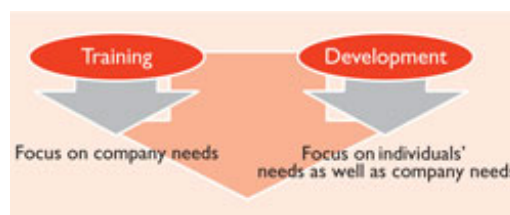
Training and development

Following the initial awareness sessions for senior managers to ensure buy-in to CI and to support effective implementation, the key task was to recruit and train the team of CI coaches.

To get 250 CI coaches fully trained and operational would take around two years. To assist this process, Corus signed an agreement with the lean consultancy firm of SA Partners, who had a solid track record of providing benefits to a number of Corus businesses. The company also had a strong bias towards engineering and manufacturing, appropriate to Corus operations.

It takes 29 days to train and develop a fully operational coach. To become certified, an individual has to complete the full course. This is to ensure they absorb the course content but is also vital in guaranteeing a consistency of approach worldwide.

Training involves improving the knowledge, skills and potential of employees. It helps them to provide a more meaningful input into the business. Development goes even further, since it focuses on the needs of the individual as well as those of the company.



CI centres on both training and development and employees are encouraged to become involved with the CI programme and most do so. CI enables them to grow in a variety of ways, by taking on more responsibility and becoming involved with teamwork and team building. Improving knowledge and skills enhances career opportunities.

The aim of CI at Corus is defined as being:

"to maximise the effectiveness of operational processes and the interface between man and machine to ensure:

- * zero product wasting defects
- * zero equipment breakdowns
- * elimination of unexpected adjustments
- * improved working and safety conditions."

In training sessions, CI coaches are introduced to a range of concepts relating to it.

The training manual shows the thinking behind CI. It illustrates a drawing with the question 'How do you eat an elephant?' The answer is 'Bit by bit.'

At the sessions, coaches are given a range of issues and problems ranging from real work observations to case studies. They are asked to identify ways of making good changes. Working through these exercises enables them to see that the best way of securing progress is firstly to define customer needs. Other tasks teach them the value of erasing waste and blockages in production processes.

Of course, CI at Corus is not just about making manufacturing more efficient. It relates to every process the company is involved in, including market research, sales, public and human relations and many other areas.

The CI coaches being trained are the champions of CI. They pass on the message to the rest of Corus' employees. They are able to communicate the value of teamwork and empowerment. Corus employees operate in a teamwork structure. Members of the teams are asked to suggest areas for enhancement in work practice and processes. Empowerment is the process of giving more responsibility for decision making to individual team members.