

➤ Continuous Improvement - The Corus Way

Introduction

In 2005, Corus was the eighth biggest steel maker in the world. It operates in over 40 countries. Since 1999, when it was set up, it has been making losses. In 2004 its new boss brought in a programme called 'Restoring Success'. This was designed to reduce waste and increase efficiency. By the end of 2004, this was a success with half of the target savings made. Corus made a profit for the first time in 2004.

Continuous Improvement (CI)

In 2005 Corus decided to improve on the 'Success' programme by getting better all round. The new programme is called 'The Corus Way'.

It has three main aims for Corus:

- * to become the best supplier to the best customers
- * to adopt world class methods based on CI
- * to grow.

CI is central to 'The Corus Way'. It has grown out of an idea from Japan called 'kaizen'. This said that firms should always be trying to improve, even in small ways. It covers all aspects of a business, not just production. It means changing the 'culture' or way workers behave, so that everyone is always trying to improve. It involves less waste and workers working 'smarter'. This does not mean working harder, but to be spending time creating value for customers. Workers should cut out activities that waste time or do not produce value.

The Corus Academy

Corus needed to make sure that CI was put into practice in the same way in all of its sections. To do this it set up a 'virtual' academy. This helps Corus share best practice. It builds common approaches to the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

Learning is helped by making sure that all use:

- * a common language (using the same words to describe the same things in the same way);
- * common tools;
- * standard ways of working;
- * shared best practice.

Training and development

These are two sides of the same coin. Training provides better workers for Corus. Development helps the workers to increase their own skills to their own benefit.

Corus trained senior managers to help bring in CI. It also trained 250 CI 'coaches', who promote and support CI. Coaches train using real work situations and case studies.

Success

CI has helped save money through reduced waste and improved efficiency. It has also helped improve work and safety conditions. Major savings have been made by changing old systems and customs. Through CI, Corus has shown that it can provide customers with better value, in a more cost effective way.