



THE TIMES 100

Corus brief

Introduction

Corus is a steel manufacturing company. It is part of Tata Steel, part of the giant Tata Group. The Group acquired Corus in 2007 as part of its policy to expand. Corus Construction & Industrial (CCI) has steel manufacturing plants in both the UK and France. The key markets for CCI include building, engineering, mining, shipbuilding and rail. CCI makes products such as machines, equipment and fastenings. Modern steel production takes place on a large scale in high volumes. Making large volumes helps to keep costs down. It therefore also keeps prices down. CCI's key challenge is to meet customers' demands for more steel, at higher levels of quality. It uses Continuous Improvement at its Scunthorpe plant to achieve this.

Continuous improvement (CI)

This Japanese term *kaizen* is used to describe this process. Kaizen covers the whole of an organisation. Its aim is to make many small improvements where these are possible. All people in an organisation should seek to improve all the time. This makes improvement everyone's responsibility. This also means that improvement is smooth, rather than in jumps. Part of the process is to remove waste. Processes that minimise waste are called *lean production*. This aims to use fewer inputs such as labour, power, space and time. CCI Scunthorpe has brought in a smoother and more efficient *flow* process for its plate steel.

A culture of improvement

CI needs teamwork and a culture of wanting to improve. CCI has devised a *toolbox* of techniques to encourage this. It has set out the vision of where it is going and uses the tools to ensure managers and operators share the vision. Workers have drawn *maps* of their processes and the flows within and between them. The maps show where the Scunthorpe Mill is now and the *future state map* shows where the owners want it to be. Using these maps, the business can improve efficiency of process flows and the working environment.

Target setting

All workers need to understand that improvement is their responsibility. Teams and workers are given the power to make changes themselves. This is called empowerment. A vital part of the plan was to set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These focus on meeting customer deadlines, rather than output measures. Corus also measures itself against other steel makers. These are called benchmarks and are designed to make sure that Corus always follows best practice.

Benefits

Some of the gains made from CI include less waste, better quality and lower costs. CCI at the Scunthorpe plant is better at both gaining and retaining customers. The plant is more competitive and achieves its targets.

Conclusion

Corus is using CI to improve its steel plant in Scunthorpe. All employees are seen as team members and seek improvement. CI supports the aim of satisfied customers and repeat sales, so secures the future of the business.