

Managing Your Parts Inventory

We have all heard about the benefits of lean manufacturing, but has your company applied lean principles to how you manage your parts? If not, you may want to consider reorganizing your parts by the process for which they are used.

Organizing parts alphabetically or in numeric order may seem logical, but it is not the most productive way to manage your inventory room. When you organize by the *process*, you will cut down-time, eliminate duplicates, and save money.

Streamline the Repair Process

When a machine breaks down, maintenance workers have to diagnose the problem, retrieve the correct parts from the inventory room and then return to the machine to fix the problem. If parts are placed according to the process (or in some cases by the product or the most frequent repair problem) when the workers are notified that the machine has broken down, they can take the correct tools and parts with them, saving unnecessary trips to the inventory room. Repairs happen more quickly; you are up and running much sooner.

Eliminate Duplicates

You probably have machines built by several different manufacturers in your plant. When you group parts by process, you will quickly discover that many machines share identical parts. This will enable you to cut back on inventory. In cases where parts are almost but not quite identical, you may even find it cost effective to retool one or more machines so that they can use the same parts.

Improve the Bottom Line

Anytime you increase productivity or decrease costly parts inventory, you are saving money. As you think about the processes you use, you will also realize the importance and cost effectiveness of retaining standardized machines that use the same parts. This eliminates the need for special tools, parts, and training for technicians on multiple machines.

Make the Effort

On the surface, organizing by process is not as easy as organizing alphabetically or numerically. Furthermore, accomplishing your reorganization will take the expertise of someone who has in-depth knowledge about your plant's processes and needs. But the rewards are great for taking the time to rethink the principles by which your inventory room is organized. Save money, eliminate duplicates, and cut down-time – you'll be glad you made the effort.