

CLIP

A shop-fitting contractor used CLIP to improve their productivity and product offering to clients, making them more competitive in the market



What attracted us to CLIP

We heard about CLIP through the National Federation of Builders. The enthusiasm and clear thinking of the CLIP engineers at the original presentation attracted us to it. We had to give a presentation in order to be chosen, but we saw it as an opportunity to 'step outside the box', and gain improvements for a priority-customer relationship.

What our aims and expectations were

For this CLIP project, we decided to focus on an area that we considered we currently did well, and to try to improve it further. This was the manufacture and installation of shop counters. We work for Argos and we will fit-out around 20 stores this year. There can be 10-15 counters in each shop, so we decided to focus on that. In a rolling contract partnership, like that with Argos, the client expects improvements and added-value.

Initially we wanted to improve on what we thought was already a good process. I thought that it would help reduce our costs and add value. This is important with the high level of repeat business that we get from clients like Argos and Debenhams. But, to do this, we felt that we needed to step back and re-focus.

We were looking for manufacturing savings in the region of 5-10% although we actually achieved considerably more than that.

NO	ACTION	DATE	STATUS
1	INTAKE CHECK LISTS ON ARGOS SAW AND PRESS (AND MANDRA)	15/11/14	✓
2	INTAKE CHECK LISTS TO BENCHES	15/11/14	✓
3	BACK FOR INTUMESCENT STRIP AND CONTIGUE	17/11/14	✓
4	CONFIRM AREA FOR SIG STORAGE	17/11/14	✓
5	CREATE GOODS OUT AREA	17/11/14	✓
6	HELP JOHN ANDER ABATE TO CUTTING OUT AREA	17/11/14	✓
7	COMPARE SC IN ARGOS AREA: - STAPLES FOR ARGOS - CLAMP PLATE - SHEET FRAMES ON ARGOS	17/11/14	✓
8	TEAM MEETINGS		✓
9	CHECK TIME PER QUANTER / MONTH		✓

An action plan enabled workshops to be rolled out over the following months

THE PROJECT

Interior Shop Fitting

CLIENT:

Argos

CONTRACTOR:

Simpson (York) Ltd

Ron Gatenby of Simpson (York) tells how the company used CLIP to review the productivity of their manufacturing and on-site process, and how it has brought cost savings and improved their product offering.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Simpson (York) carries out a large amount of shop fitting work for established retail customers, mostly on a repeat basis. We have our own joinery shop and teams of installers.

The company evolved from a management buy-out about nine years ago, and our teams have a very positive attitude towards business improvement.

■ **The main aim of the CLIP activity was to improve the productivity for the standard counter units, through:**

- Reducing the time for assembling the Argos counter
- Creating a better, safer working environment
- Getting a fresh view of the best way to do things
- Demonstrating improvements to our customers and the team
- Understanding the potential gains of using CLIP.

■ **Our main concerns with the Argos counters were that:**

- Detailed drawings and information are not always available on time
- We can't always get the right materials and equipment for a job, within the required time scale
- Our knowledge of the process would make it difficult to challenge fixed ideas.

Identifying just these main concerns on the project allowed us to work on the most important areas.

How the CLIP process worked for us

It was important that everyone got involved so that they were contributing. It needed someone to be 'The Champion' to steer the process through and someone to manage it on a day-to-day basis. We involved eight people in the project and initially I acted as champion. The Assistant Manager in the joiners shop led it on a day-to-day basis, involving the bench-hands and machinists. The team had a broad spread of age and experience and interacted well together.

Involving the team in this way allowed them to become comfortable with this new process. This enabled them to review & analyse our working methods and contribute ideas, whilst gaining in confidence. This allowed a



change of attitude and approach to a familiar process.

Working with the CLIP engineer, we decided that the first step was to discover exactly what was the current situation. We chose seven measures to look at, although not all were relevant to the joinery shop. Then we could use this to plan the improvement workshops and we could then compare them before and after the improvements.

The team visually mapped out the process flow for the Argos counters and noted any concerns. They also did the same for the flow of materials through the joinery shop.

Our CLIP engineer suggested that we video each step of the process. It was somewhat unnerving to watch at times. The team noted the most wasteful areas, so that we could tackle these during the workshop activities. Then we developed an action plan.

We used the improvement workshops to focus on the 5Cs, and to identify wasteful activities and eliminate them. We found the area around the rack was a problem, so the team carried out an initial check on it. They also found a number of machine faults, such as damaged extraction hoses.

They drew up diagrams showing the best cutting patterns and created a new cutting schedule. This enabled the joiners to spend more time cutting, and less time working out the best use of materials.

When looking at our manufacturing activities for signs of the 7Ws, we found that the process for cutting counter tops was particularly wasteful. We used to clamp a template to the work piece, before it was routed. But then the clamps had to be removed and re-clamped, so that the cutting could be finished. We ended up developing a new workstation, which incorporated vacuum clamps, so that we could cut the templates in one go. This saved a lot of time and effort.

We also created clear areas in front of the timber store. This reduced the amount of time we spent reorganising the timber. Gangways were clearly marked on the floor to designate clear areas, to make it easier to transport timber and veneer. Further checks on the press led us to allocate a clearly marked home for all of the materials required for them.

We gave a checklist to each employee working in a selected area, so that the team could maintain the factory conditions that they had achieved during the workshop.

‘This was not an initiative just for the suits, but an opportunity for the workforce to contribute.’

Ron Gatenby of Simpson (York) Ltd



above: before – an initial 5c activity (configure) was carried out around the rack saw area & below: after



After we had improved in the joinery shop, we followed the counters to site to get the installers' views. Here we found that the counter top length can creep, causing a misalignment of joints. The drawings needed better co-ordination and there was often a risk of damage to the counter fronts, after they had been fitted. We also developed a spacer block system to make levelling the units quicker and easier.

The team produced so many action points that the workshops ran over a number of months. This was not just an initiative for the 'suits', but an opportunity for the workforce to contribute.

How we benefited from this initiative

None of this was rocket science, but the CLIP programme created an environment to stop, analyse and release creative thinking.

We have now made several improvements to the way we work. We are better organised, and through this have a safer working environment in the joinery shop. We have saved time managing the process by improving the cutting lists, cutting methods and assembly processes. This has allowed better efficiency. We have also improved the fitting problems we had on site, and the quality of the work has improved.

We have managed to reduce the number of man-hours per counter by 1.5, which is a 17% improvement in productivity. This was especially good remembering that our target was 5-10%.

By focusing on the 5Cs, we laid a foundation for continuous improvement. We used the activity to spot any abnormal conditions and control them. Our employees now have ownership of their own work area, which has improved teamwork and training.

The main benefit is that we can now give our clients a better product and when we had to re-tender our Argos contract, we were able to be more competitive.

How we plan to use the skills and lessons learned

The main benefit for us was the opportunity to focus on the manufacturing process, which can then be readily extended to other product lines.

For future CLIP projects more record data needs to be available at the start, to allow the project team to carry out their preliminary review.

Our experience is that success depends on getting people to their comfort level, where they can contribute positively. The team leader and champion roles are very important to this process.

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LEARNING POINTS

- For us, it was an opportunity to ‘step outside the box’.
- The idea of videoing each step of the process came from our CLIP engineer. It was somewhat unnerving to watch at times.
- None of this was rocket science, but the CLIP programme created an environment to stop, analyse and release creative thinking.
- Success depends on getting people to their comfort level where they then can contribute. Having a champion and team participation is very important to create this.
- Identifying the main concerns on the project allowed us to work on the most important areas.
- The team had a broad spread of age and experience, which encouraged interaction, with a balance of enthusiasm and experience.
- Our employees now have ownership of their own work area, which has improved teamwork and given them the confidence to challenge fixed ideas, which in turn is allowing continuous improvement.
- Specifically, we learnt that we need to have more record data available to work with at the start.

JARGON BUSTING BOX

■ **7Ws – look for seven wastes that can never be added value:**

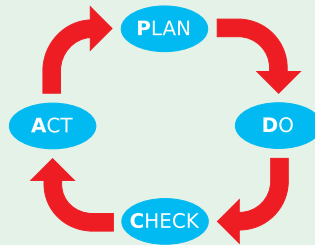
- Motion
- Transport
- Waiting
- Overproduction
- Defects
- Unnecessary inventory
- Inappropriate work or processing.

■ **5Cs – check these to lay the foundations for continuous improvement:**

- **Clear out** – separate the essential from the non-essential
- **Configure** – a place for everything, and everything in its place
- **Clean & check** – assess the current condition of the environment
- **Conformity** – ensure standard easily maintained
- **Custom & Practice** – ensure everyone follows the rules.

■ **THE PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT (PDCA) CYCLE –**

a way of thinking which encourages continuous improvement



■ **THE CLIP – ‘standard structured approach’ – which is made up of four main stages:**

- **Pre-diagnostic** – setting the aims and training the team in lean tools and techniques
- **Diagnostic** – practically applying the tools to analyse the situation
- **Improvement activity** – looking at the data for opportunities to improve processes
- **Follow up** – identify barriers to success and set improvement actions in place.

■ **VISUAL CONTROL –**

a major part of the CLIP process is to use visual tools to display data, highlight improvements and record ideas. These include:

- **Key Performance Indicators** – are the measure of performance of activities that are critical to the success of an organisation
- **Pareto Chart** – a comparative bar chart that shows the number of defects for each chosen area of work, and the cumulative total of defects over the whole project
- **Fishbone Diagrams** – are used to identify the possible causes of problems. Start by defining the problem to be investigated and write it down. Then draw lines (bones) to represent each cause that runs into it. Finally you can brainstorm what is actually the cause of the problem
- **Priority Matrix** – a quadrant chart used to prioritise which improvement areas to focus on first. For example, you can place activities that will have a high impact at a low cost in one quadrant and focus on these first.

GETTING HELP

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