Reclaiming Capacity: How Process Optimization Restored Competitiveness for a Custom Manufacturer

Background

A B2B manufacturer producing fully customized, made-to-order products found itself facing a growing challenge: demand had outpaced production capacity. Lead times extended significantly, and customers began seeking alternative suppliers to meet their needs. The company's team, composed primarily of engineers, recognized the issue but lacked the operational experience to streamline processes and scale production effectively.

Objective

The Empirical team was brought in to identify and implement solutions to shorten production time without compromising the exceptional quality and craftsmanship that defined the company's reputation.

Methodology

Empirical took a hands-on, floor-level approach to diagnose inefficiencies and design practical solutions tailored to the team's capabilities.

- **Observe, Listen & Assess:** Start by spending time on the manufacturing floor and engaging with key stakeholders to uncover issues, frustrations, and bottlenecks. This hands-on approach ensures a full understanding of the root causes behind production delays.
- **Process Development:** Design and document improved workflows that directly address the identified challenges. Incorporate the capabilities of both the team and the facility, recommending targeted enhancements to optimize efficiency and throughput.
- **Stakeholder Review:** Present the proposed process improvements to key stakeholders for feedback and alignment. Incorporate any necessary adjustments, then finalize and deliver the approved solution to the team for implementation.
- **Implement & Execute Solution:** Deploy the finalized process on the manufacturing floor, closely monitoring its performance in real time. Make targeted adjustments and refinements as needed to ensure optimal efficiency and continuous improvement.

Results

- **Production throughput increased by 30%,** allowing the company to meet growing customer demand without expanding headcount or capital investment.
- **Average lead times were reduced by more than 35%,** restoring customer confidence and winning back previously lost business.
- **Employees reported increased clarity, morale, and accountability,** with a stronger sense of ownership in daily operations.

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