

Overcoming Project Paralysis: A Structured Approach to Manufacturing Excellence

Background

A manufacturing plant was falling behind on several projects, including critical safety initiatives. The team was stretched thin, with projects frequently starting and then stalling as other priorities took over. The plant manager turned to Empirical for help establishing a structured project management methodology and driving these initiatives to timely completion.

Objective

Empirical was charged with evaluating and organizing all ongoing projects and action items, establishing clear priorities, and implementing a structured work process to enable the team to execute efficiently and complete initiatives, leveraging both internal and external resources.

Methodology

Working closely with plant leadership, Empirical executed a comprehensive four-phase process to build sustainable project management capability.

- **Assessment:** Partner with the plant team to understand existing workflows and project management practices. Through collaborative discussions with key stakeholders, identify critical projects and develop a clear understanding of current gaps and priorities.
- **Project Prioritization and Process Development:** Establish clear criteria, rules, and standards to consistently evaluate and prioritize projects, ensuring alignment with business objectives and resource capacity.
- **Stakeholder Buy-In:** Present the proposed prioritization framework and process to key stakeholders to ensure alignment, agreement, and full commitment to the approach.
- **Facilitate the Solution:** Implement the finalized methodology and process, providing hands-on guidance to ensure projects are executed efficiently through both internal teams and external partners. Support the identification and engagement of appropriate third-party vendors to drive successful outcomes.

Results

- **A structured and repeatable project management framework was successfully implemented**, providing clear visibility into all active and planned initiatives.
- **More than 30 stalled projects were reviewed, prioritized, and restarted**, including several safety-critical initiatives.
- **The plant reduced project backlog by over 30% within the first 120 days**, accelerating delivery timelines and restoring confidence across the organization.
- **The overall culture shifted from reactive firefighting to proactive project execution**, enabling the plant to stay ahead of operational priorities and compliance deadlines.



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