Inalfa Roof Systems

the Client

Inalfa is the largest supplier of roof systems in the roof market and the second largest in the passenger car market (with 20% of market share).

Their involvement starts during early phases of the development of a new car, about 2.5 years before start of production. Inalfa Roof Systems takes care of design, project management and assembly of the roof systems and delivers straight to the production line of the car manufacturer, where the roof is fitted. The roof systems from Inalfa can be divided into four categories: standard roofs; advanced roofs; sunshades; truck hatches.

Headquartered in Venray, the Netherlands, it employs 1,700 people with facilities in Slovakia, USA, South Korea, China, Brazil, Mexico and Japan.

the Challenge

The contraction of the automotive sector during 2008 exposed a number of weaknesses in Inalfa’s business and highlighted areas that needed improvement. The contraction also required the company to quickly reduce its cost base and find more opportunities to win business in the sector.

Marcel Schabos was appointed CEO of Inalfa and having previously worked with S A Partners recognised that Lean could make a significantly contribution to the business turnaround.

the Solution

The project started with Lean Maturity Assessments which were used to identify intervention strategies at each of its sites.

Following the assessment, a key number of corporate initiatives were launched. These included:

- Implementation of a Lean Coach programme to develop internal competence and sustainability.
- ‘Voice of the Customer’ work with key customers to ensure the Inalfa value stream met customer needs.
- Delivering improvement to the product innovation process to gain competitive advantage.

the Approach

Inalfa identified the implementation of a Lean coach programme as critical to driving Continuous Improvement in the organisation. The company placed high importance on developing internal capability and sustainability to address short-term challenges and longer-term growth opportunities. S A Partners were invited to deliver the Lean coach programme to support this objective.
Inalfa also recognised introducing new products would support their ability to consolidate their position in their sector and prepare them to win business as the market grew. S A Partners were used to support Inalfa in optimising CI within the product innovation process.

S A Partners ‘Lean Maturity Assessment’ was used to analyse the level of lean maturity at each of the Inalfa sites. The outcome of this work was used to create a plan of action at each site to address the critical need to improve Inalfa’s performance.

For example at its headquarters in Venray, prioritisation was given to capacity and quality improvement. In the US, the main focus was placed on working with the supply base to drive through value stream improvements.

A ‘Voice of the Customer’ project was launched to enable Inalfa to better understand the value criteria that mattered most to its customers. This work was used to drive a series of improvements in servicing a particular customer which Inalfa had not done business with for several years. The project led to Inalfa winning a large contract with this customer and the relationship continues to grow from strength-to-strength.

The business is now also using an extended enterprise project to develop close working relationships with its own suppliers to maximise value to their customers. This project is delivering further quality and capacity, and lead time improvements for Inalfa’s customers in North America and Europe.

S A Partners is now implementing much of what has been done in the US and Europe with Inalfa in South Korea and China.

Inalfa now has 11 accredited Lean Coaches signed off by Lean Enterprise Research Centre. It has increased throughput in South Korea, the Netherlands and North America and has won a contract to supply a large automotive manufacturer.

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