

The impact of Process Improvement initiatives in manufacturing industry in South Africa

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Abstract

The aspect of sustainability has been widely debated in the Industrial Engineering and Operations management fields. Researchers such as Nicola Bateman (2005) and Accenture (2010) argued that many companies are doing at least one initiative of continuous improvement to make their businesses profitable by minimizing operations costs. They also eluded that companies world-wide have taken part in process improvement activities however they seem to fail in sustaining these initiatives, these arguments were based on work done in the United Kingdom and United State of America and not covering the South African (SA) perspective on the sustainability issue. This paper addresses the issue of sustainability with special attention to the work done by the South African government through agencies, such as the Automotive Industry Development Centre (AIDC) and Productivity SA, in order to ensure that manufacturing companies remain competitive to the rest of the world. The results of this study confirm that manufacturing organizations are not sustaining process improvements implemented hence not realizing the benefits of these government funded projects.

Keywords

Sustainability, Rapid Process Improvement (RPI) and Continues Improvements (CI)

Biography

Sydney Theko is a Project Manager for Supplier and Enterprise Department within the AIDC, amongst other projects, Sydney is championing the current Rapid Process Improvement programme that is fully sponsored by the South African government. He is a scholar studying towards his degree of Master Technology (MTECH) in Industrial Engineering in the Faculty of Engineering at the Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa. He earned Bachelor of Technology (BTECH) in Industrial Engineering from the University of South Africa (UNISA). Sydney spent his entire working life in the Automotive Industry where he accumulated extensive experience in Industrial, Process and Project Engineering. He began his career at Robert Bosch where he led a number of layout and work study related improvements. Mercedes-Benz SA is where Sydney spent 8 years responsible for Continuous Improvement initiatives and training MBSA staff on how to increase/improve plant productivity. As a Project Process Engineer, he led the team that defined and implemented the processes using lean manufacturing principles when Volkswagen SA started the new Polo (VW250) production line from a green field. Sydney went on to be instrumental at Ford Motor Company SA as a Manufacturing Launch Engineer of the New Ford Ranger (T6).