

ARTICLE



# The Opportunity in Turbulence: Manufacturing Operations Improvement

By David Pate  
JUL.28.24

## Key Takeaways:

- Post-Covid economics, high interest rates, and election cycle jitters make operational excellence a vital source of bottom-line growth for manufacturers today.
- Manufacturers must act quickly to produce sustainable operational improvements that drive competitive advantage in multiple market-change scenarios.
- Engaging experienced Lean professionals who apply repeatable process improvement methodologies accelerates, amplifies, and grows the impact of internal CI specialists to reduce waste, increase agility, and achieve operational readiness.

***“It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change.”***

- Charles Darwin

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According to a [new report from Institute of Supply Management \(ISM\)](#), the manufacturing sector contracted for the third straight month in June, although the overall economy continued to expand. It’s an election year, too, adding to uncertainty. With interest rates high, borrowing to fuel growth isn’t an option.

Which way will things go—downturn, upturn, status quo? What is the most efficient way for companies to accelerate revenue, control costs, and get the rapid, measurable improvements that will position them to prosper no matter what direction things take?

Manufacturers truly focused on the prize know that especially in this environment, the right answer is to turn up the volume on process improvement. Squeeze out the waste. Close performance gaps. Reconfigure plant assets to match demand.

And what is the fastest, most cost-effective way to do all that? Multiply in-house CI strength with outside crackerjack Lean manufacturing experts. Turn the operational improvement engines on high with people who will get onto the shop floor and stay by your side to get the job done. Faster. Because when you’re trying to compete and win, there’s no substitute for speed.

## Not DIY Or Consulting. DIY Plus.

While it may seem that a DIY approach to process improvement makes the most sense cost-wise, it's simply not true. Sure, you aren't outlaying funds for consultant fees. But you're also not reaching performance goals nearly as fast as you could be. Nor are you taking advantage of proven strategies and tactics that others have used to supercharge their operations. Methods your CI people can learn, adapt, and leverage to keep transformation momentum going long after the consultants have gone.

Internal CI experts have undeniable expertise. But sometimes even the most experienced people need help. I have worked with companies whose internal teams possess deep process expertise but struggle to translate the impact of improvements on the business. Bringing a fresh perspective on driving operational performance and converting those improvements into bottom-line results can be a game-changer. Especially when it comes from Lean professionals who have walked in various shoes, from the shop floor to the top floor. And helped hundreds of manufacturers imagine and execute lasting process improvement.

Frankly, if the current ways of driving operational excellence were working, you wouldn't have gaps in the first place. When inhouse experts collaborate with Lean consultants they create a powerful engine for knowledge, innovation, and improvement. In the end, DIY takes longer. And that just costs more.

## A Unique Trifecta for Change: Speed, Breadth, and Staying Power

Since the pandemic, many manufacturers have gone from Just-in-Time to "get it whenever you can". Now, many of you have excess plant capacity, excess inventory, just more resources than you need. Or maybe you have the opposite problem: more orders than you can fill.

You know CI is important and may have at least one process improvement expert or a small team on board. With the initiatives they're already managing, do these continuous improvement professionals have time to undertake a major transformation plan as well?



### RAPID IMPACT

*"Remember that time is money."*

- Benjamin Franklin

The stakes are high. Your company needs to drive significant operational change to thrive and maybe even to survive. Yes, resident Black Belts have a solid grasp of Lean principles. But that's not enough. Driving transformational activities at top speed and efficiency is a different skillset.

Lean manufacturing experts have applied these principles with many different manufacturers under varied circumstances. They've mastered the ability to move performance in a measurable way quickly. These advisors know how, when, where, and with whom to apply Lean methods for the greatest effect in the shortest amount of time.

For manufacturers who have performance gaps between where they are and where they want to be, every second counts. Every extra day or month operating at this "less-than" pace has a cost. In competitive positioning. In lost opportunity. In readying for unpredictable market change. Dedicated, experienced professionals are the operational improvement X-factor that can catapult your firm to the top.



## PROVEN PROCESS:

When it comes to manufacturing performance challenges, as Yogi Berra famously said, “It’s like déjà vu all over again.” Seasoned operations management consultants consistently encounter the same issues year in, year out. In every economic condition. Regardless of industry sector or manufacturer size. Armed with this deep operational base of firsthand knowledge and lessons learned, seasoned external changemakers have developed a battle-tested blueprint for process-driven change. Repeatable approaches, methods, and strategies. To pinpoint weakness, identify opportunity, power change. A “force multiplier” of intelligence to move faster and go deeper.

Your DIY Plus CI team can customize this transformation gameplan to resolve your company’s specific operation process challenges. It’s a three-legged stool for managing for daily improvement. One leg is the strategic structure and overall process: the hierarchy for change. The second includes the tools and KPIs/metrics that measure, track, and communicate performance and progress. The final leg may be the most important of all: building the skills and capabilities of your internal team to continue delivering sustained gains over time.



## SUSTAINABLE RESULTS

**“In the end, all business operations can be reduced to three words: people, product, and profits.”**

- Lee Iacocca

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Notice the order of those words. People first. Production workers. Frontline supervisors. Middle managers. Employees at every point of impact in the manufacturing chain. These are the people responsible for implementing change and delivering improvement. Hands-on collaboration, coaching, and mentoring with everyone directly involved in the transformation process is the key to keeping the plan crisp and adaptable as circumstances evolve. In the end, it’s the people who make the difference between lagging behind and marching forward.

## Readiness Is All

**“If you always do what you’ve always done, then you will always get what you always got.”**

- Henry Ford

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To compete and win, manufacturers must operate at peak performance. Especially now, with the sector under pressure and so much uncertainty in the air. Doing the same old thing simply isn’t an option if you want to get ahead—or even maintain your status quo.



## Your Success Is Our Goal

How can you get ahead now and give your firm a stable process platform for what lies ahead? Pair the deep and specific knowledge of your CI experts with the expansive, “big picture” perspective of outside Lean manufacturing troubleshooters. If ever there was a case for “two heads are better than one”, this is it. Combining forces creates a CI team that sees the forest and the trees. Your team, fortified.

TBM consultants are steel-toed boot and jean people. They’ve had careers in manufacturing, filling roles from the shop floor to the executive suite. They also have broad-based expertise in operations, tools, processes and how to improve them. These are not ivory-tower intellectuals dispensing advice and sending reports from afar.

We collaborate with your inhouse CI professionals as teammates, operating in sync and alongside to achieve the process improvement goals you’ve set.

While doing it all yourself may seem less expensive at first, results don’t lie. Complementing your own CI resources with external expertise is the most cost-effective path to success. In fact, working alongside in-house CI professionals, TBM routinely achieves significant and sustainable performance improvements in months, not years.

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## Meet the Expert



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## Speed wins every time.

TBM specializes in operations and supply chain consulting for manufacturers and distributors. We accelerate operational performance to make you more agile and help you accelerate business performance 3–5x faster than your peers.



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