

## WOW WEE



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### OVERVIEW & BACKGROUND TO THE LEAN INITIATIVE

After initial introductions were made, followed by a site tour, a basic presentation on the principles and tools of Lean was given to all the staff by Leading Edge Group consultant, Barry O'Brien. This helped to identify several potential areas for improvement, including a review of inventory holding, and a review of shop and retail spaces. We quickly realised that a new business management structure needed to be put in place to aid in the daily/weekly operational needs of the company. Also, chaos at Christmas time, due to the large amount of temporary staff recruited, needed to be managed in a much leaner way. Workplace organisation was identified as a priority, and Aine quickly realised the real potential of Lean and quickly became a disciple – this is what was needed to really make a step change in the business and Aine was on the case.

### LEAN INITIATIVE UNDERTAKEN – LEAN THINKING, TOOLS, TECHNIQUES

Core Lean concepts like 5S, Kanban replenishment, and standard work all formed a key part of this project and each helped to inculcate a positive culture change within the organisation. We all realised that we needed to manage the business better by using and analysing real data. In addition, we could all see the potential benefits of being better organised, having faster response times to stock queries, and reductions in customer complaints. It was identified that we needed to revise the layout of the stores to hold "more with less" by creating a functional "supermarket" in the storeroom. There was a reduction in work-in-progress and improvements in overall general tidiness. Standardised processes were created for the key activities in the workplace. A new process for controlling "multipart" orders was put in place. There were 8 hours per week of lower level tasks delegated out to other staff, allowing Aine time to concentrate on more strategic and value-adding work. It was also decided to create an office space for supervisors and admin staff.

#### Kaizen

A "Kaizen Blitz" was carried out on the storeroom. Procedures were drafted for embroidery and packing, and a procedure tested for product shipping. Benefits were immediately seen at the individual workstations as there was less clutter.

### COMPANY OVERVIEW

The Wow Wee journey began in 2002 in Ennis when Aine Gleeson had a small business idea and set about designing elegant Christmas stockings and hand-embroidering each one. In 2004, Aine launched the first e-commerce website in County Clare - WowWee.ie – and she now employs eight wonderfully creative and inspirational ladies. The dedicated team help people to source beautiful and luxury personalised gifts, and have them shipped locally or anywhere in the world. Wow Wee is proud of its great reputation in gifting and supplying gifts to some of the top companies and celebrities around Ireland, the UK, and the US.

[www.wowwee.ie](http://www.wowwee.ie)

Table 1. Annualised Cost Savings Achieved



Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

**5S**

Implementing 5S in the storeroom is well in progress and we have completed the set-in-order phase.

**Kanban**

A Kanban supermarket was trialed on high runner products. Label stores have been completed using mail merge and Word, and a dymo printer purchased. Certain procedures were modified to reflect more subjective terms – that is neat, tidy, high quality – with a view to more data-driven procedures.

**LEAN INITIATIVE IMPROVEMENTS & IMPACT**

Since Lean has been implemented within the company, the operation is running much smoother. It is now easier to perform stock counting and there is an increased tidiness across the organisation which has led to more effective use of floor space. There are also standardised procedures developed for the production area, which greatly supports control of our operational costs. The operation is running

much smoother since Lean was implemented, and inventory control has improved considerably using Kanban replenishment systems and 5S organisational improvements. The team is very happy with their newly designed work areas which has also led to increased productivity. We have taken all the feedback on board and customised the wall on the inside of the building with positive affirmations and relatable phrases. This was a very enjoyable team effort, and you would now know it is Wow Wee.

The written processes have been fully tested with new season workers that recently joined our team to accommodate the Christmas orders. There is a huge reduction in errors, meaning our customers have a great experience and our repeat orders have increased. Our manual multi-batch orders are working and were fully tested with the increase in orders for Christmas 2019.

We have continued, and will continue, to roll-out Kanban and 5S across the store. Our staff have gone through a mindset change and we are now using real data to aid decision making and identify and achieve improvements in the business. It is important for us as a team to continue to

TASKS	Cost Savings Achieved
<b>Workplace Organisation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5S, Kanban, storeroom reorganisation, building of small two-person office, reorganising specific production areas [embroidery, vinyl, ornaments, books, packing, shipping].</li> <li>New multi-batch procedure was implemented for complicated orders.</li> </ul>	€2,250
<b>Data Integrity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better use was made of computer systems, more accurate input and use of vendor pricing, regular stocktaking and weekly data analysis of performance metrics.</li> </ul>	€900
<b>Standardised Procedures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standard work procedures were developed for all key processes facilitating process repeatability. This was particularly useful for training temporary operators for production spikes [i.e. Christmas rush]. This also helped to minimise customer complaints caused by errors in picking for example.</li> </ul>	€2,000
<b>Effective Delegation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By empowering staff, supervisor and management non-value-add time was reduced with more time spent on strategy and improvements.</li> </ul>	€6,000
<b>Cost Savings [annually recurring]</b>	€11,150
<b>Additional Spend Year 1</b>	[€2,500]
<b>Adjusted Net Cost Savings</b>	€8,650

implement standard work and refine 5S through standardising and sustaining our processes. We aim to finish the physical layout in the embroidery, and get frames organised and mounted on the wall. We are continuing to work on rolling-out and sustaining 5S in the warehouse. We are also aiming to locate a new packaging area using Lean principles and optimised flows. A business management structure is now in place to keep the operational needs of the company up to date.

*“I quickly realised the real potential of Lean for growth and efficiency and promptly became a disciple – this is what I needed to really make a step change in the business. I was on the case!! We are now fit for purpose for the next development phase of the business.”*



Figure 4.



**Lean Service Provider**  
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