

**With efficiency drives representing an ever more central aspect of thriving manufacturing operations, Lean business solutions must accommodate the values, processes, and organisational culture that both drives waste reduction and increases customer value. eBECS, an industry leading specialist which utilises Microsoft Dynamics AX in the design and delivery of world class lean and agile business solutions throughout the extended supply chain, terms such a framework 'Lean ERP'.**

Following the purchase in 2007 by Microsoft of Lean Enterprise for Microsoft Dynamics AX from eBECS, the partners jointly created the Lean Centre of Excellence. The Centre is designed, says Andrew Rumney, solutions director, eBECS: "To serve as an educational outreach and training facility for organisations that require training on Lean capabilities within Microsoft Dynamics AX so as to further Lean initiatives within their companies."

To effect the organisational transformations central to creating a culture of Lean, the Centre serves the Microsoft partner community for extensive sales and implementation training. This is coupled with workshops for current Dynamics customers and those companies considering the implementation of Lean Enterprise for Microsoft Dynamics AX.

Crucially, however, the collaborative venture recognises that a successful Lean implementation does not rest on providing the right software tools alone. Of equal importance are the



skills of the team that architect and deliver any given solution. Explains Rumney: "To maximise the considerable benefits of a Lean solution, it should not simply 'fit' the current processes of an organisation. Conversely, Lean thinking must represent an evolving solution based on defining value, establishing flow, and running an enterprise based on pull techniques."

The Centre's genesis can be traced to 2001 and the release of the company's first Lean-specific software. In 2003, eBECS developed its Lean Enterprise for Microsoft Dynamics AX, the first genuine Lean ERP solution true to waste minimisation principles. Accordingly, the pioneering nature of such functionalities was recognised by eBECS' winning the Microsoft Overall Excellence award – the Lean Enterprise solution was subsequently purchased by Microsoft to form part of its standard Dynamics AX solution.

eBECS is further enhancing the solution under its appointment as the Microsoft Dynamics Lean Centre of Excellence. For example, says Rumney: "This year sees eBECS focus its attention on the next release of Dynamics, where we shall attack and "lean out" areas such as engineering change management and lean accounting with more focus of industry verticals. In addition, there will be thrusts towards a more visual system with even less complexity."

Similarly, eBECS continues to provide customers across manufacturing, distribution, and the

extended supply chain with expertise on how they can utilise Lean and Agile solutions to reduce waste, increase response times, and maximise value to their customers. Indeed, says eBECS director Stephen Wilson: "The company has developed a complete series of Lean Manufacturing modules designed to complement and enhance the functionality of the Microsoft Business solutions programme. Manufacturers are thus provided with comprehensive lean functionality while co-existing with the traditional MRP world."

As a result, organisations are able to implement solution sets including Kanban, lean order schedules, vendor-managed inventory, and Heijunka board scheduling through the additional functionality provided by eBECS within Lean Manufacturing II and III. Moreover, the Vendor Portal addresses many of the more advanced vertical requirements of a Lean Enterprise for the automotive, aerospace & defence, high tech, and medical devices and equipment manufacture sectors.

Says Rumney: "Ultimately, the Lean Centre of Excellence represents a collaboration between partners that recognise Lean as no longer being simply a manual improvement programme. Indeed, both Microsoft and eBECS acknowledge that contemporary Lean operations represent an institutionalised, seamless solution which is crucial in supporting an organisation's culture of total waste reduction."

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