



TechSolve and Datacraft Solutions Cited in Automation.com

TR Cutler, Inc., November 09, 2005

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PR9.NET November 09, 2005 - Paper kanban intent has efficacy; the reality of cluttered transport routes, overflowing finished goods stores, immense quantities of WIP (work-in-progress) and unscheduled machine downtimes, often make the merits of this lean manufacturing functionality questionable. When there are also frequent complaints about delivery problems, the reality is quite distant from the theory. Poor implementation of kanban is quickly overcome in an e-kanban environment. Kanban is a visual signal that something needs to be replenished. Lean Manufacturers today use Kanban to drive a process to make, move, or buy the appropriate parts. Thus, Kanban becomes one of the fundamental building blocks of a pull (or consumption based) replenishment system. No card? No Replenishment.

Sue Via, Senior Project Engineer with TechSolve (www.techsolve.org) suggests that Kanban is only part of the lean process, "Kanban is a higher order concept and many things must be in place before implementation of the concept is feasible. For instance, the foundation of Standard Work, 5S/Visual Management, and Quality at the Source must be in place and functional. All affected processes should go through an initial lean transformation to eliminate waste, establish Flow and initiate a Pull mindset. All processes including equipment must be reliable in order to minimize the inventory requirements."

Two of the primary limitations of a manual (or paper based) Kanban system are data availability and scalability. According to Justin Diana, VP of Datacraft Solutions (www.datacraftsolutions.com), "In a typical manual Kanban implementation, most transactions and orders are placed with faxes and emails and recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. At the end of the day, this information is limited to the individual managing and recording this data. The individuals responsible for growing and improving the process, have limited or no visibility to the data. As the number of parts, suppliers, and cells grow, managing this process only becomes more convoluted."

Thomas R. Cutler (www.trcutlerinc.com) authored a feature article about Kanban in the October issue of Automation.com (www.automation.com).

TechSolve can be reached through:
Justice & Young Pr
Rodger Roeser
513-388-4700

Data craft Solutions
www.datacraftsolutions.com
Matthew Marotta
800-819-5326

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About TR Cutler, Inc.

Professional Marketing Firm reaching the Manufacturing Community Worldwide

Phone:	954-486-7562
FAX:	954-739-4602
Website:	http://www.trcutlerinc.com
E-Mail:	trcutler@trcutlerinc.com
Address:	3032 S. Oakland Forest Dr. Ste 2803