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Lean Thinking in the food supply chain: An Action Case Research

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine the adoption of lean tools in food supply chains as well as to understand how small and medium companies (SMEs) can implement lean tools in order to develop a lean action plan designed for SMEs. A case study research is used in the present study of a UK tea company. An action research approach was adopted to study the lean process and diagnosis of problems occurred during implementation (Vlachos, 2011). The present study developed a lean action plan needs to include the following steps: Re-Define Value, Map Value Streams, Detect Waste, Lean the Production Operations, Ideal State of Production Operations, and Develop a Pull Strategy. The findings derived from this research would facilitate practitioners in undertaking lean endeavours. The potential contribution of leaning food small and medium companies can be enormous given the percentage of food waste across supply chains (Vlachos, 2004a, Vlachos, 2004b). The contribution of this study is threefold: (a) it offers insights on a lean action plan for small and medium companies. (b) it sheds light on how lean thinking can be applied in the food sector (c) it tests a unique reflecting methodology using action case research to gather, interpret, and develop reflective learning.

Keywords: Lean Thinking, Lean Action Plan, Tea Industry, Case Research, Action Research, Value, Value Stream, Pull Strategy

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