Continental: Speeding Through the Continuous Improvement Curves

Continental has what it takes to enter the production excellence race and win. They are an established worldwide automotive supplier positioned comfortably within the top 3 manufacturers of vehicle networking and information products. The company has made large investments over the past five years in Mexico, where they currently operate hundreds of lines. In Periférico Guadalajara, they not only develop and manufacture components for carmakers, but also for other vehicles such as motorcycles, golf buggies and trucks—totaling 6 million parts a year.

On their vehicle console lines they produce systems for the largest automakers. Their ability to meet demand and deliver consistently to high quality standards rests on standardized work. Manual assembly is their flexible production secret weapon. And managing a line of skilled operators is an important role fulfilled by a highly motivated team of industrial engineers, quality personnel and operations managers.

No continuous improvement curve was too treacherous for the Continental team of goal setters. They’re setting some impressive records:

**Key results achieved:**
- 50% reduction in kaizen time
- 11% increase in line efficiencies
- 30% reduction in defects
- 15% reduction in scrap rates
- $10K savings per customer incident
The challenge: scale project efforts beyond human observation

This team was tasked with reducing variability in assembly and set out to develop a program to observe and analyze adherence to standardized work on the lines. Their efforts were both valiant, and valuable. While they couldn't catch every departure from the standard assembly process on every line, they definitely had an impact on improving assembly processes.

Their challenge was to scale the program, but how?

As the consulting project manager Edgar Jimenez-Rodriguez recalls, “The chief line leader typically has three or four lines, and he or she had to physically go and see if the line associates were following standard work. Considering the size of the plant and responsibilities of the line leader, this is difficult work for them that was taking a lot of unnecessary time and effort.”

They needed to find a solution that would allow them to not only become more productive, but would also eliminate some of the bias introduced when people observe each other’s work. The team needed to know that their efforts weren’t thwarted by human interpretation and subjectivity.

According to Mr. Jimenez-Rodriguez,

“Instead of spending half of the day walking from line to line, making observations and missing some deviations, our chief line leaders became very efficient at monitoring the lines using video, detecting areas for improvement and implementing immediate fixes with the line associates.”

Drishti allows for an accurate, consistent source of video for work review and training content. The team is able to easily observe line performance from their computers using line, workstation and timestamp designations. As well, video can be made immediately available and shared with associates, so they can use it to improve their daily work.

The team understood that line associates would be hesitant about having cameras recording their process. Management knew that success would mean sharing video and working closely with line associates to show them footage. What they found was line associates and supervisors developing an appreciation for factual evidence of both good and not so good work.

Plant manager Vyola Fisher states,

“Suddenly, the line associates had a concrete way to help us identify the issues in real time. Line associates can prove an error happened through no fault of their own, and help us identify the true cause of a problem. Once they saw the benefits of Drishti, they developed a lot of trust and enthusiasm for it.”
Additional benefits for an even bigger business impact

It wasn’t long before the success of the team was noticed across the site. The quality group was particularly interested in assembly video footage. They had just received a product from a customer who claimed it was defective. Their process for customer complaints is rigorous and time-consuming work for all operations team members, who have to help sort products, inspect them in the lab, evaluate the root cause of the issues and investigate assembly processes. The Continental quality team takes a lot of care in handling customer complaints.

Knowing the process could take up to five days before they could pinpoint a potential root cause, they decided to take a look at Drishti video to help them evaluate the potential defect. What they found was a huge opportunity. The assembly recordings of the returned product didn’t show any evidence of a defect. In fact, all processes were completed perfectly from assembly start to packaging, and they had proof. This was a game changer for their quality teams. It not only cut down on the time needed to investigate any issue, it also provided concrete information that led to faster assessment of the complaint. Reporting and resolution times required by the customer were no longer a risk and could be met easily. Video evidence could also be included in reports delivered to the customer.

Now, the Continental team has a closed-loop process from complaint analysis to resolution. Using Drishti allows them to not only speed up investigations and root cause analysis, but it also provides ready to use video evidence of what went right in assembly and what needs improvement. The same video evidence does double duty as training content that efficiently and effectively provides feedback to line associates and supervisors, thus limiting the risk of the same defect recurring.

The results: reaching Continental’s destination with efficiency and quality gains

The Continental team with the help of Drishti is providing a cost-effective way to improve work on the assembly line – without the need for subjective observation by a legion of line supervisors. They’re reducing their time to run kaizen events by 50%. In addition, they have been able to increase efficiencies on the line by 11%, attributed to less variability and more standardized work.

As standardized work is followed more often, a virtuous cycle is being created. Defects have fallen by 30% and scrap has been reduced by 15%. The long-term effects of speeding up the time between receiving a customer complaint, needing to find a root cause of a defect and implementing countermeasures is now being assessed. The team has already determined that they can save up to $10K per customer incident by narrowing the days of investigation from 5 days to 5 hours. And, the team has high hopes for future lines running with Drishti.

In the meantime, they can rest assured that Drishti has their back. It’s always on and always available to help them answer any assembly question.

“Our goal is always zero defects, and with Drishti, we are able to achieve that aim,” says Fisher.

“Our relationships with our customers are much stronger with Drishti, because we have the confidence and evidence to show that our quality is top-notch.”
About Drishti

Drishti’s mission is to extend human capabilities in an increasingly automated world. Its AI-powered video analytics technology provides visibility and insights that transform the pace and impact of manual assembly line improvement. Manufacturers use Drishti to anchor true digital transformation, driving sweeping improvements in quality costs, efficiency gains & time-to-proficiency for line associate training. And line associates rely on Drishti to be more consistent and efficient, becoming even more valuable on the factory floor. In 2019, Drishti was selected by the World Economic Forum as a Technology Pioneer; in 2020, Drishti was named to the Forbes AI 50 and a Top 5 AI Company in North America by NVIDIA. In 2021, Drishti was named a Manufacturing Leader by NAM and was named to the CB Insights AI 100. For more information, visit www.Drishti.com