

Too Much Data Too Many Alternatives Too Much Cost

Pharmaceuticals & Medical

This international electronics company operates in a range of consumer and business-to-business markets including medical device and diagnostics. At a medical device plant in North America, the plant produces top-selling, high tech products.

CHALLENGE

An overabundance of information and no time to spare—this modern dilemma challenges us all. But for some time-sensitive activities, the ability to use information quickly and effectively is not just useful—it's critical. When a quality issue halted production of an expensive, high-demand product, efforts to solve the problem quickly were derailed by the sheer quantity of relevant data and alternatives. A troubleshooting team of the most talented and experienced people in the facility worked for two hours without any clear direction emerging.

SOLUTION

During a break, several of the managers on the troubleshooting team recalled a KT workshop they had taken earlier in their careers at other companies. The operations manager still had his workshop materials, so they decided to revisit the systematic KT approach and apply it to their twenty-first century dilemma. The operations manager reviewed the materials and facilitated the group. Using the KT process questions, the team members quickly narrowed down possible causes and eliminated previously plausible ideas. Soon they confirmed that a handling technique caused the problem. After testing a simple, low-cost corrective action, production resumed.

RESULTS

Based on this success, the managers reached out to KT. Soon a program of training, coaching, and process improvements that integrate KT approaches was initiated. Results were impressive. Product output climbed 8-10%. Improved quality reduced warranty costs. Time spent solving problems fell. Many future problems were avoided because areas of variability were identified and process improvements were made. The challenges and opportunities of a data-rich environment are many. Today this manufacturer's cross-functional teams use data and KT process to take efficient and effective action. They share a renewed belief in their ability to handle complex problems and create quality products.



SCORECARD

- Improved material quality reduced warranty costs
- Product output climbed 8–10%
- Improved troubleshooting reduced time spent solving problems
- Improvements were made to avoid future problems