

## Does Lean Apply to My Business/Organization?

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Wherever there is a process, there are value adding steps and non-value adding steps (waste). The main concept of Lean is to define and flow value without interruption. The waste in a process interrupts that flow of value. When we speak of Lean in these broad terms, one can see that it can be applied anywhere. It's not just about manufacturing!

Even some of the tools of Lean that sound like manufacturing tools can be applied in other environments. An example of that is set-up reduction. Whenever there is a change from doing one thing to doing another, there is most likely some steps followed as you stop what you were doing to switch to some new task. The idea is to minimize the "downtime" as you switch by doing some of the changeover tasks while the current work is still being done or after the new work starts up. Or it could be doing set up tasks at the same time.

Examples:

- Changeover from breakfast to lunch at a fast food chain
- Changing from one patient to the next in an operating room, patient room or exam room
- Changing over from daily accounting functions to preparing month end statements
- Moving from one mowing client to the next

A kanban system essentially controls the flow of materials in a production line. However, a kanban system can be set up in an office to control the flow of documents from one person to another which could help prioritize work. Why dump two days of invoicing on someone when they can't even start it until the next day? Could the upstream process have worked on something else with higher priority instead?

That same example touches on something called batch size reduction – smaller batches can be completely finished more quickly than large batches. One piece flow is the fastest!

The business model that Toyota provides is built on respect for people and continuous improvement. Most would argue that both elements are essential for business success – no matter what the business is.