

# Lean

## Definition

Lean is a systematic approach to the identification and elimination of waste, or non-value-added activities, through continuous improvement.

## Brief History

Lean is rooted in the Toyota Production System (TPS), a world-renowned manufacturing process known for its quality and efficiencies. Since the mid-1950's TPS has evolved to become the global benchmark in manufacturing for efficiency, quality and employee participation.

Toyota has succeeded where many others have failed by empowering its front line workers to be problem solvers and creating a culture of continuous improvement. At Toyota, work is simplified and waste eliminated in a never-ending cycle.

In the early 1970's, when Toyota's success was becoming undeniable, American companies began to study TPS. By the mid-1970's TPS principles began to take hold in North America in the form of "Just-In-Time Production" and later "World Class Manufacturing". In the 1990's the term "Lean Manufacturing" was first used to describe the underlying principles of TPS, which is essentially to "lean out" waste and complexity.

Today Lean has become the standard for manufacturing excellence around the world, and is being applied to other enterprises as well. In the last few years Lean has made significant inroads to healthcare and its application in this field is rapidly growing.