



## Ask The Experts!



**Bill Kuhns, VMEC Professional Manufacturing and IT Advisor**  
**bkuhns@vmec.org/ (802) 425-2499**

**Question:** I keep hearing about 'Lean Office'; I thought Lean was for production lines. We don't make things. What does this have to do with me?

**My Answer:** Do you have good people working really hard but not getting consistently good results? The problem is likely that the process needs to be improved. You're correct that Lean started out in manufacturing, and much of the literature is based on that foundation. In manufacturing, Lean has a long track record of making significant improvements in lead time, cost, quality and employee satisfaction.

Lean is really a process improvement methodology that just happened to be applied to manufacturing at first. Even though they seem very different, it turns out that office processes have many of the same problems as manufacturing processes - errors, long lead times, lots of expediting - sound familiar? The Lean toolbox (with some enhancements) is very effective at identifying and solving these process issues.

At VMEC, we have more than ten years of experience doing Lean projects in non-manufacturing settings. We've worked in health care, government, higher education and other sectors as well as addressing office processes in manufacturing companies. We've worked on processes from billing to order entry to product development. The results: dramatic reductions in lead time and improvements in quality, and employees who are engaged in the improvements and excited about the outcome.

If your organization suffers from office or administrative processes that don't perform as desired, Lean provides a powerful way to accomplish positive change. VMEC offers an introductory workshop called Lean Office 101 that shows how Lean concepts can be applied in non-manufacturing settings. Please check our Workshops link at <http://www.vmec.org/workshops> to view upcoming Lean Office opportunities.