



# Lean Manufacturing - The Iteima way

*Inside Iteima projectile looms assembly plant in Zuchwil, Switzerland.*

*Mr. Carlo Rogora, CEO, Iteima.*

This year Iteima celebrates the Golden Jubilee – 50th year anniversary of the foundation of Somet, one of the brands that make up today’s Iteima. As part of celebrating this milestone with Iteima, PTJ editor has visited Iteima facilities around the world and will feature a series of reports in the coming editions. Discover more about the Italian technology major and the ambitious bet it made (and won) on Lean Manufacturing implementation across all the Company’s Production Facilities from Colzate in Bergamo Province of Northern Italy (the Corporate HQ) and exporting the Lean approach to Zuchwil in Switzerland and all the way to Shanghai, China.

## THE ITEIMA WAY – LEANER THAN EVER

“Iteima today is a leaner, meaner version of Iteima in the past,” says Carlo Rogora, CEO of Iteima Group. “The past four years have meant a major overhaul and wide-reaching reorganization activities



with the goal to streamline, optimize and modernize the production facilities of Itema Group located around the world, from Colzate to Zuchwil to Shanghai, in full compliance of Lean Manufacturing principles," continued Rogora.

Shortly after his nomination as Itema CEO five years ago, Carlo Rogora launched a major program to overhaul the production and logistics flows within the Company. An experienced turnaround operations executive with a solid track record, within a short period of time, built a dedicated task force of "lean" professionals with the mandate to entirely rethink all the Company's flows related to production and logistics processes, to eliminate inefficiencies, in order to bring immediate benefit to Itema customers.

"Our ultimate objective was to increase Itema Group's ability to meet Customer needs, ensuring the necessary flexibility, agility and ability to quickly respond to changes in a highly variable market, reducing lead time, whilst, at the same time, providing even better levels of service, quality and cost," added Rogora.

This is how Itema embarked on the arduous journey to streamline and to optimize the manufacturing facilities around the globe, from Colzate in Italy to Zuchwil in Switzerland and all the way to Shanghai in China. Now all Itema plants are real flagships of world-class manufacturing in full compliance of the most stringent Lean Manufacturing principles.

The "Lean" project initially focused on the Group's main factory in Colzate spanning the entire process from Mechanical Machining, Pre-Assembly, Assembly, and Quality Control. Shortly thereafter, Lean Production's implementation activities were rolled out also within the Shanghai assembly site (see interview with Mr Lorenzo Maffioli, Managing Director of Itema Weaving Machinery (China) Co., Ltd.), with a view to increase the integration and standardization of processes at Group level. Last, but not least, a dedicated team was put in place and charged with re-modernization of the ex-Sulzer plant in Zuchwil, Switzerland, which still today produces the legendary projectile loom, revered worldwide by real aficionados of this technology.

Efforts across all plants focused first on labor-intensive areas, with the aim of significantly reducing throughput times, gradually making the switch from a push-type production to a pull-type logic that ensures that every single step along the way leads to real value creation within the manufacturing departments.

In order for this to happen, the Company had to rethink its own internal and external logistic flows, thus involving, in addition to the Production area, also the Logistics and Purchasing areas.

The activities implemented have focused on the Pre-Assembly area and were later extended to the Assembly department. In particular, efforts have concentrated on:

- ❖ Value stream mapping of the entire production process
- ❖ "5S" activity (where "5S" stands for a workplace organization method that uses a list of five Japanese words: seiri, seiton, seiso, seiketsu and shitsuke, which can be translated from Japanese as "sort", "set in order", "shine", "standardize" and "sustain")
- ❖ Re-layout of sub-groups of pre-assembly
- ❖ Implementation of internal kanban logic ("kanban" is an inventory system to control the supply chain in order to achieve Just-In-Time manufacturing)
- ❖ Application of one-piece-flow concept internally to the pre-assembly job-shops
- ❖ Reviewing the logic of kitting and reorganizing internal logistic flows to the department.

The Itema Lean Manufacturing project set very challenging goals, both in terms of lead time, as well as waste reduction and productivity improvements. In parallel with the lean manufacturing process, major investments in the production plant through tailor-made CNC equipment were made, further boosting the flexibility, the capacity and the capability of Itema plants.

"The results of going Lean so far speak for themselves with more than doubling the production capacity of the existing plants, thus being able to meet the constantly growing demand for Itema weaving machinery and to ensure the shortest lead-time in the market.

But, we vow not to stop here, but to continue proudly and committed on our way towards Lean Company mentality for the sustained benefit of all Itema Customers" concluded Carlo Rogora. ◆

