The Method to WTI’s Mad Success
A Powerful Continuous Improvement Case Study

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Executive Summary

In the first 12 weeks of starting a new approach to Continuous Improvement, World Technology Ingredients (WTI) saw an incredible 97% increase in production output, catapulting the company toward its 5-year objective of 3X growth. Over the subsequent 4 months, the company has broken a series of production records and currently sit at an 130% increase in output since it began experimenting with the new approach.

Their new Continuous Improvement model was specifically designed to address the company’s top 3 challenges with previous CI efforts:

1. Lack of organizational skills / expertise
2. Lack of engagement / support
3. Insufficient tools / information

The model recently applied by WTI is now being expanded enterprise-wide and has enormous implications for the Consumer Packaged Goods industry at large.

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Contents

- Who in the World is WTI?
- What are They Trying to Do?
- What Wasn’t Working
- The Challenges
- What Finally Work
- The Results
- Key Learnings
WTI, or World Technology Ingredients, is a 35-year-old manufacturing company that produces functional wet and dry food ingredients designed to organically extend shelf life for meat, fish, and other consumer food products.

With 80 employees, over 30 products, and multiple patents, WTI is a leader the food processing industry’s functional foods vertical.

Located in the small town of Jefferson, GA, WTI sits just over an hour northeast of Georgia Institute of Technology downtown Atlanta and 30 minutes west of the University of Georgia in Athens, which served as an early Research and Development incubator for WTI.

The company’s founder, Wolf Ludwig, built WTI on principles of quality, integrity, technology, and above all, customer service.
What is WTI Trying to Do?

3X Growth in 5 years.

It's rare that a company is as crystal clear about what it is working to achieve. WTI knows that significant growth opportunities lie ahead. They also understand that as those opportunities are realized, they’ll soon run into production constraints.

WTI has identified two paths to growth:

1) Top line sales growth
2) Higher production capacity

These conditions create the driving force for creating a culture of Lean and Continuous Improvement.
Why wasn’t the old way working?

A few years ago, WTI began a Lean journey in order to create a healthier company culture and get more output from its plant. They started with value stream mapping, Gemba walks, audits and other methods commonly associated with Lean. This eventually evolved into a “fix everything and comply” type of program with little or no meaningful business results to show for the effort.

Over time, they improved their ability to see and solve problems, using A3 Sheets and semi-quarterly meetings at the executive level to help put their corporate strategies into more actionable plans, which often failed to materialize. Their CI program had turned into a set of disjointed spreadsheets, print forms, white boards, and meetings that just made for “extra work” and didn’t seem to be improving the fire-fighting culture or producing the desired results.
The Challenge

With aggressive growth targets and production constraints limiting the company’s ability to meet its goals, WTI needed to figure out how to improve the way it improved. Through this process, they identified their CI program’s 3 core deficiencies, which happened to closely mirror the issues experienced by many others across the industry:

1. Lack of Skills / Expertise
   Problem-solving and the capability to effectively apply other Lean concepts were concentrated among certain key players and not disseminating into the organization in any systematic way.

2. Lack of Engagement / Support
   CI was “operations focused” and tactical work had no clear link to the company’s overall strategy. High emphasis was placed on “hitting schedule” but not on improving performance. Investment in improvement effort up and down the organization was low and infrequent.

3. Inadequate Tools / Information
   Spreadsheets, whiteboards, print forms, and other Lean tools were in use but were producing nominal impact on helping the company grow. Significant improvement opportunities were left out of daily discussions and consequently, resources were not being allocated to their resolution.
The Impruver Continuous Improvement System

What Finally Worked?
The 3-dimensional approach called the Impruver Continuous Improvement System was taken to address WTI’s greatest challenges.

A Results-based Continuous Improvement Certification program was used to address the problem of lack of skills / expertise.

A Leadership Standard Work Process was used to address the problem of lack of support / engagement.

The Impruver Industry 4.0 software solution was used to address the problem of insufficient tools / information.

Workforce Development
Organizational Engagement
Digital Transformation
Impruver’s Industry 4.0 Technology solution enabled powerful tools such as strategy deployment, root cause analysis, project management, performance tracking, and best practice sharing to not only talk to each other, but also to people in the organization.

WTI used Leadership Standard Work to engage people at the right levels in structured Quarterly, Monthly, Weekly, and Daily team-based activities designed to maintain alignment to strategy, drive for results, and sustain progress.

A Results-based Continuous Improvement Certification model was used to systematically build coaching capability among leaders and problem-solving skills throughout the enterprise.
Impruver’s Methodology Further Explained

Workforce skills and capabilities are systematically developed by issuing Certificates as measurable results are achieved. Every employee at WTI starts by working toward their Impruver Level Certification and works their way up to the appropriate level for their role. Certification levels are consistent with Toyota KATA framework.

The long-term objective is for every employee in the company become certified at the appropriate level. The Impruver Software and Leadership Standard Work model provide the structure, tools, and information to effectively manage the Continuous Improvement program at all levels, systematically connecting overall corporate strategy to the daily improvement activity of all employees.
The Results

Since WTI started using the Impruver Continuous Improvement System in May of 2019, they have more than doubled their production output with no capital investment. During this time, they have broken several production records, which continues to this day. They have also begun to implement Continuous Improvement enterprise-wide.

Week 0

Pre-Impruver Average Output

Post-Impruver Average Output

Beginning of Engagement

Beginning of Improvement Cycle

End of Phase I

Impruver Certification Issued

Launch of LSW Program

Over 100% Improvement

Record-Breaking Output

Exceeded Target by over 50% Ribeye Cookout
Key Learnings

• Most of WTI’s initial Continuous Improvement effort was focused around manufacturing operations with little connection to the company’s growth strategy. The enactment of the monthly Steering Committee meeting as part of Leadership Standard Work helped the leadership team to prioritize limited CI resources around the most “at risk” areas of the company’s strategy.

• Initially, WTI had developed an over-reliance on data to “motivate improvement”. Once tracking began, there was an initial bump in productivity; also known as the Hawthorne Effect. Then productivity began to stall until the team began making key process changes. Leaders need to continue to drive improvement activity to see ongoing growth.

• Increasing Continuous Improvement activity created costs and time demands that were extraneous to the budget. The team wanted to “go faster” but ran into constraints in resources needed to get things done. It’s important to be realistic about how fast the company needs to improve and be prepared to allocate time, money, and other resources for growth.

• WTI leveraged a Kaizen model as it’s vehicle of analysis and execution of improvement. The team realized that even though the kaizen teams were driving the work, there were enterprise-wide implications for the changes being made. WTI decided to set a min and max limit of 3 running kaizen teams at a time to effectively manage the amount of change and ensure continued improvement. These teams meet weekly and run until their target conditions are met, which ranges from 2 to 12 weeks.
Current customers are **RAVING** about Impruver!

“Working with Impruver has been an absolute pleasure; and the results have been really incredible!”

Mike Brodziak  
*President*  
World Technology Ingredients

“My team is so much more engaged in Continuous Improvement; they have to be because of how the system works.”

Terrence Fitch  
*Production Supervisor*  
World Technology Ingredients

“We realized a 97% increase in production output; everyone is becoming a problem-solving engine.”

Troy Magruder  
*Director of Manufacturing*  
World Technology Ingredients

“The ability to deploy strategy, track OEE, solve problems and manage projects all in one platform is powerful!”

Damon Nix  
*Sr. Product Manager / Food Industry Leader*  
GaMEP at Georgia Tech
For More Information

The Impruver Continuous Improvement System is a product of Impruver Technologies. It is a technology-driven CI system that helps small to mid-sized manufacturers in the CPG industry to get more out of their people, production plants, and other resources.

Contact us today to learn more!

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