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# Optimizing Production in an Electronics Manufacturing Industry Using Six Sigma: A DMAIC Approach to Process Enhancement

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## Optimizing Production in an Electronics Manufacturing Industry Using Six Sigma: A DMAIC Approach to Process Enhancement

By

Shubham Parekh

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science

In

Manufacturing Engineering Technology

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

July 2024

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## Optimizing Production in an Electronics Manufacturing Industry Using Six Sigma: A DMAIC Approach to Process Enhancement

Shubham Parekh

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

Advisor

Committee Member

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Committee Member

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### Optimizing Production in an Electronics Manufacturing Industry Using Six Sigma: A DMAIC Approach to Process Enhancement

Shubham Parekh

## A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This paper focuses on the application of DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control) process of Six Sigma methodology for increasing the production numbers in an electronics manufacturing industry. The overall production numbers are improved by identifying the root causes and improving the process efficiency. Detailed analysis of the process cycle time for all stations is conducted and key areas for improvement are identified. Proper implementation of the suggested changes is conducted, and the results are verified. Further recommendations are provided for addressing the key improvement areas for reducing the cycle time of the bottleneck process. The findings highlight the benefits of implementing six sigma processes in an electronic manufacturing industry and provide a roadmap for other organizations seeking similar improvements by using data driven decision-making.

### **Introduction:**

Considering current worldwide trends and improvements, it is evident that the electronic manufacturing business has significant importance in today's world. With the world transitioning into the digital era, there is a growing need for electronic components and chips. Electronic manufacturing includes the processes of designing, fabricating, testing, assembling, and distributing goods, which are like conventional manufacturing methods. Electronic components have a wide variety of applications, including cell phones, military equipment, automotive systems, medical devices, financial services, and several other areas. To meet the growing demand, organizations are using several strategies to enhance their production and product quality while minimizing expenses. Continuous Improvement tools and methods like Lean, Six Sigma etc are highly used by industry to effectively address this difficulty.

These tools promote the use of data driven decision-making practices by using various processes like time study, statistical process control, control charts, pareto charts, etc. While six sigma is a methodology and DMAIC approach is used in this to address the challenges in most of the industries. Data driven tools and methods are used while following this approach. After the collection of the data, they are analysed with the help of a software like Minitab where the required numerical tests can be conducted including hypothesis testing, ANOVA, Control Charts, graphical representation etc.

Therefore, for our experimentation we will be following the DMAIC approach of six sigma which will include all the phases of the approach. Data collection will be done with the help of a stopwatch for time studies while the production numbers will be

collected from the ERP system of the company. The challenge will be to increase the production number of the gas meter production line.

## **Literature Review:**

As mentioned by Bhuiyan and Baghel, continuous improvement is an ongoing process which focuses on improving processes, products, services, etc in any industry. Regardless of the of the industry into consideration, the ideology is that there will always be room for improvement in efficiency, quality, reducing waste, etc. While focusing on these aspects, not only the company gets benefited by reducing the cost, but it also improves the customer satisfaction by increasing the value of product or service for the customer (Bhuiyan and Baghel 2005). Key pillars of continuous improvement are mentioned below:

- Employee Empowerment
- Voice of Customer/Customer Focus
- Kaizen (Small incremental changes)
- **Standardization**

Lean manufacturing divides wastes into eight distinct classifications. Therefore, waste identification and categorization constitute the initial phase of lean manufacturing within an organization or manufacturing sector. After the classification of all wastes is complete, industries can then work to reduce or eliminate the waste. Enhancing production efficiency is the primary objective of waste elimination (Womack and Jones 1996). The Toyota Production system was the first to use Lean principles,

which can also be described as a sequence of ideas that are used to improve or develop customer value inside a manufacturing unit while simultaneously minimizing the number of operations that do not contribute value. Not only does lean manufacturing provide value for consumers, but it also emphasizes the significance of employee happiness and personal growth, with a particular focus on continuous improvement (DUTTA and BANERJEE 2014).

Waste is broken down into eight separate categories, as was mentioned before in the Lean methodology. Overproduction, which happens when companies generate higher quantities of things that are in demand by customers, is one of the key causes of waste buildup. Overproduction is a contributor to increased waste. The accumulation of an excessive quantity of inventory not only increases the related risk but also the associated costs. In the process of transportation, companies divide their manufacturing operations over numerous locations, which results in higher costs and product downtime that does not add any value to the manufacturing process. Motion, in which an employee is required to carry out a few unnecessary motions to perform his work tasks, is an inefficient use of time in the same way. It is generally accepted that the smooth running of every process on the factory floor is essential to the overall success of the business. During the period when a product needs to wait in line or be inactive before moving on to the following step, the unoccupied time for that product is extended. During this time, no real work is being carried out. Along the same lines, this is waste. For a product to reach the operational condition that was intended for it, it must go through a considerable number of processes and stages (Jayanath, et al. 2020). On the other hand, it is important to avoid doing an excessive amount of processing on a product for which the processing provides no additional value. Underutilization of talents is a phenomenon that occurs when businesses engage workers without properly using their abilities or failing to acknowledge their employees' creativity and expertise. This phenomenon is referred to as "under-utilization of talents." According to the lean concept, this is also considered to be a waste since it relates to the innovation and continual advancement of the organization, and it also hinders such processes. Deficiencies are the last category of waste that may be categorized. When it comes to the number of defective devices that are produced, this is relevant. Each of the categories of waste that were discussed earlier adds to an increase in the total production duration, as well as an increase in production expenditures and dangers. As a result, it is of the utmost importance for companies to make the reduction or elimination of waste their top priority, since doing so will reduce the negative effects connected with waste and improve the efficiency of their operations accordingly (Womack and Jones 1996).

The preceding section depicts several types of waste, and we can see the advantages of using Lean manufacturing principles here. Lean manufacturing focuses on optimizing the workflow process, which improves production efficiency. Streamlining processes not only helps with that, but it also helps to reduce operating or manufacturing expenses, resulting in higher profit margins per product for the business. As previously said, one of the key features of lean is continuous improvement and defect reduction, which implies that the product's quality will ultimately increase. Furthermore, because of the changes, items will have shorter lead times or throughput times, allowing them to be supplied to customers more rapidly. This will minimize the total delivery time to the consumer. Reduced shipping, delivery, and lead times, as well as enhanced product quality, will result in increased

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customer satisfaction. While lean standardizes the work structure at each station on the assembly line, it also helps staff get used to shifting product cycles across production lines. This implies that if the product changes, the people, as well as the necessary procedures, equipment, and software, are adjusted quickly. This implies that the production line's flexibility will rise (Mayatra, Chauhan and Trivedi n.d.). It also empowers the employees to make certain decisions in case of a defect on the line or product. This improved employee involvement in the production line provides them an opportunity for personal growth because it involves quick problem-solving techniques and as a result job satisfaction is also improved. Value Stream Mapping is the systematic process of visually representing and analysing the flow of materials and information needed to coordinate the operations of manufacturers, suppliers, and distributors to efficiently deliver goods to consumers. It aids in pinpointing the origin of waste and identifying opportunities for applying diverse lean strategies (Sundara, Balajib and SatheeshKumar 2014).

Six Sigma is one of the methods which is used for improving various processes used in industries. This focuses on minimizing the defects and the variation between two similar products which results in increased quality of the product and the efficiency of the overall process. This concept originated from Motorola around 1980 and later it was adapted by General Electric. The widespread use of Six Sigma is seen in various industries such as finance, healthcare, manufacturing, etc. Six Sigma is a statistical concept that basically focuses on how much the mean of the process is deviating from perfection which means that how far is the actual process mean is deviating from the observed mean. Six Sigma terms specify all the data under the Six Sigma limit switch says that the total number of defects would be no more than 3.4 defects per million. If

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a process can achieve the Six Sigma limits it means that the process is very efficient with very minute errors. As it is specified by the name Six Sigma is a statistical process control tool which means that this process depends very heavily on the use of different statistical tools to analyse the data and make decisions based on that (Yang and El-Haik n.d.).

For our experimentation we will be conducting a time study on all the stations on the production line. The basic definition of a time study is that to determine the cycle time of a process. There are various ways by which we can determine the cycle time of a process. Some of the methods are mentioned below (Duran, Cetindere and Aksu 2015):

- Time logs
- Occurrence sampling
- Engineered Method

It is to be noted that in most of the time studies, allowances need to be added but since we are focusing on the cycle time for the individual operators and the machine, we will be ignoring the allowances.

One of the most common methods of time study is MTM-1 method. It is known as Methods-Time Measurement which uses predetermined motion times for various tasks and then uses it to measure and analyze the cycle time. The unit of measurement for time is known as TMU (Time Measurement Units), where 1 TMU is equal to 0.036 seconds. The entire task is divided into various individual motions and then compared with the standard times (Freivalds and Niebel 2014). The various recognized motions according to MTM-1 is mentioned below:

- Reach  $(R)$
- Move  $(M)$
- Turn  $(T)$
- $Grasp(G)$
- Position (P)
- Release (RL)
- Disengage (D)
- Apply Pressure (AP)
- Eye Action (EA)
- Body, Leg, and Foot Motions (B, L, F)
- Simultaneous Motions (SM)

Bures and Pivodova mentioned that this time study is widely used in manufacturing and industrial engineering applications. The basics process includes breakdown of the entire process into various individual tasks. After that the individual tasks are identified and assigned to the specific motions, each motion is assigned a specific TMU value based on the standard times mentioned in the MTM-1 tables. Then, all the individual TMU values are added to get the overall TMU for the task and then it can be converted into seconds by using the value mentioned above (Bures and Pivodova 2013). While talking about the advantages of MTM-1, Almeida and Ferreira mentioned that this method is used for precise measurements in time study while also providing a standardized method to ensure consistency for all the processes. Although, it is to be noted that proper training is required before conducting experimentation which signifies its complex nature. Apart from that, one of the major

disadvantages is that this method can only be used for static tasks and processes which makes it very difficult to implement in a continuous motion manufacturing industry (Almeida and Ferreira 2009).

Another method used for the measurement of time is MTM-2 which simplifies the steps and reduces the amount of motion classification. The classification of the motion is in this method is mentioned below:

- $\bullet$  Get  $(G)$ 
	- o Reach, Grasp and Release
- $\bullet$  Put  $(P)$ 
	- o Move and Position
- Get Weight (GW)
- Put Weight (PW)
- Regrasp (R)
- Apply Pressure (A)
- Eye Action  $(E)$
- Foot Action  $(F)$
- $Step (S)$
- Bend  $&$  Arise (B)
- Crank  $(C)$

MTM-2 method also uses TMU as a unit of measurement for the cycle time and in this method as well the TMU for the individual motions are added and then the overall TMU can be converted to seconds by using the same conversion factor.

## **Methodology**

Six Sigma focuses on the use of statistical tools in a structured approach and one of the major approaches used by the 6 Sigma is called the DMAIC approach. This constitutes of 5 steps which are Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve and Control. There are some key elements which needs to be considered before applying the DMAIC process. One of them is to address the potential opportunity of improvement and defining the value of the project (Montgomery 2013).

The objectives of each phase of DMAIC process are mentioned below:

- 1. Design: This includes the identification of the problem, defining objectives and scope of the project. For our project, the key objective is to increase the production numbers to keep up with the over-production schedule. Further information is mentioned below.
- 2. Measure: This phase includes the collection of data. Time study for each station of the assembly line was conducted for our project and variation in data was present for most of the stations.
- 3. Analyse: The collected data is than analysed and root causes are identified. Based on the result of the analysis, improvements are suggested.
- 4. Improve: Suggested improvements are implemented and then data is collected again to analyse the improvements.
- 5. Control: Mistake proofing methods are implemented where the process is checked and addressed in case the process moves away from the desired limits.

## **Experimentation**

This project was conducted in an electronic manufacturing firm with the aim of enhancing the company's output numbers. The products being considered are gas meter integration products. These items include cellular connection, enabling them to connect to the network and deliver real-time data to the customer.

Itron manufactures the circuit boards in-house and then transfers them to the assembly line where they are integrated with the housing assembly to complete production. The process flow for the production on assembly line is mentioned below:

- 1. Board Testing: Circuit boards are tested for any functional imperfections including the functionality of the electronic chips and the firmware.
- 2. Solder: In this process Batteries are attached to the circuit boards which allows them to operate without the need of external power source.
- 3. Housing Assembly: Soldered units are placed into the housing assemblies which protect them from the external environment.
- 4. Heat stake: This is one the most critical process as the connecting wires between the battery and circuit board are fixed at the proper position in the housing assembly with the help of thermoplastic stacking by heating the plastic cutouts in the housing assembly to reform and fix the position of loose wires.
- 5. Potter: After the heat stake, all the units are potted with a mix of epoxy and then allowed to cure for 45 minutes. This is an automated process because of which there is little to no variation in the cycle time.
- 6. Final Test: The units are tested for one last time before they can be shipped to the customer.
- 7. Pack Station: The units are packed and moved to the shipping warehouse.

The Process Flow Chart of the production line can be seen from the below mentioned figure.



#### *Figure 1: Assembly Line Process Flow Chart*

The methodology opted to overcome the challenge of increasing production numbers is the DMAIC approach. A better understanding of Project along with the outcomes and deliverables is mentioned below.



*Figure 2: Project Flow Chart*

## **1. Define Phase**

The production line currently manufactures about 402 units per shift. While the company has an upcoming scheduled shutdown, they want to ensure that the customer demands, and the delivery of the products is not affected during that period. Production numbers need to be improved if customer satisfaction is not affected.

Problem Statement: To keep up with the customer demand, production numbers of the assembly line need to be increased from 402 units per shift to around 770 units per shift.

Project Scope: Find the bottleneck station on the production line by conducting a time study for every station on the production line while also comparing the performance of the operators for each station.

#### Milestones:

- Successful completion of time study
- Identification of the bottleneck station
- Implementation of change
- Improvement analysis and summary of the project

#### **2. Measure**

Before conducting the time study, it is important to verify the current production numbers to verify the problem statement. Production numbers for a few observed shifts are mentioned in the table below. It is to be noted that all the observations are taken for "A" shift to minimize the variation and get a better understanding of the situation.



Actual production numbers can be different from the theoretical number because of human errors or environmental factors. After looking at the production numbers, a time study for each station on the production line was conducted while focusing on the operator performance. The results of each individual station are mentioned below. Also, to compare the performance of operators based on time taken by them to complete the task at each station, 10 readings are taken for each operator. The six operators on the production line are classified by six alphabetical orders from "A" to "F". The average cycle time for each station can be found below while the detailed

time studies can be found in the Appendix section.

- Board Test  $= 28.8$  Seconds
- Solder Station  $= 47.18$  Seconds
- Assembly Station  $=$  38 Seconds
- Heat Stake Station  $= 46.8$  Seconds
- Potter  $=$  40 Seconds
- Final Test  $= 16.5$  Seconds
- Pack  $= 16.5$  Seconds

### **3. Analyze**

In this phase, analysis of the data collected in the measure phase is addressed.

#### **Board Test**

We can see from the overall statistics of the station across all the operators that the average time taken to complete the operation is 29.3 seconds with a standard deviation of 3.045 seconds.

#### **Statistics**

Variable Mean SE Mean StDev Variance Minimum O1 Median Q3 Maximum 0.393 3.045 9.270 22.008 27.567 29.834 31.773 Time (Seconds) 29.310 33.994 Variable Range Time (Seconds) 11.986

#### *Figure 3: Board Test: Statistics*

To compare the performance of operators, mean time taken by each operator is calculated. While comparing the results, we can observe that the mean time taken by each operator is very close to each other with a small variation.

### **Statistics**



#### *Figure 4: Board Test: Operator Performance Evaluation*

From the figure below, we can have a better understanding of the individual

performance while also confirming that the data is distributed normally.



*Figure 5: Board Test: Histogram*

To check the highest mean time across all the operators, a box plot was generated. We can see that operator "E" has the highest mean time at 30.59 seconds for conducting the board test.



*Figure 6: Board Test: Box Plot*

## **Solder Station**

We can see from the overall statistics of the station across all the operators that the average time taken to complete the operation is 94.35 seconds with a standard deviation of 28.67 seconds. Although there are two solder stations present on the production line, which means that the overall cycle time for the station is 47.18 seconds.

Overall Cycle time = 
$$
\frac{94.35}{2}
$$

 $= 47.18$  Seconds

This makes it that bottleneck station for the line as this station has the highest mean cycle time. Improvements will be discussed in the improve phase below.

#### **Statistics**

Variable Mean SE Mean StDev Variance Minimum Q1 Median Q3 Maximum Time (Seconds) 94.35 3.70 28.67 821.98 76.23 79.80 82.25 85.73 168.55 Variable Range Time (Seconds) 92.32

#### *Figure 7: Solder Station: Statistics*

After getting a better understanding of the individual cycle times, we can clearly see that operator "F" has nearly double the mean cycle time when compared to the rest of the operators. While other operators are taking around 80 seconds to complete the task, operator "F" is taking nearly 157.21 seconds to complete which makes this station the top priority for improvements.

#### **Statistics**



*Figure 8: Solder Station: Operator Performance Evaluation*

The box plot and histogram below give a better visual representation of the difference in mean time between the operators while also confirming the normal distribution of the data.



*Figure 9: Solder Station: Histogram*



*Figure 10: Solder Station: Box Plot*

#### **Housing Assembly**

We can see from the overall statistics of the station across all the operators that the average time taken to complete the operation is 43.10 seconds with a standard deviation of 9.51 seconds. This will not be under the priority list because of the presence of idle time between housing and heat stake station as heat stake station has higher cycle time.

#### **Statistics**



*Figure 11: Housing: Statistics*

To compare the performance of operators, mean time taken by each operator is calculated. While comparing the results, we can observe that operator "D" has the least mean cycle time for the task, while operator "F" has the highest cycle times at 36.56 seconds and 50.02 seconds.

## **Statistics**



#### *Figure 12: Housing: Operator Performance Evaluation*

From the figure below, we can have a better understanding of the individual performance and see the variation between individual data points while also confirming that the data is distributed normally.



*Figure 13: Housing: Histogram*

To check the highest mean time across all the operators, a box plot was generated. We can see that operator "F" has the highest mean time at 50.02 seconds for the assembly operation.



*Figure 14: Housing: Box Plot*

## **Heat Stake**

We can see from the overall statistics of the station across all the operators that the average time taken to complete the operation is 46.84 seconds with a standard deviation of 7.57 seconds. This station also needs to be on the priority list as the cycle time for this station is also very similar to the bottleneck station.

## **Statistics**

Variable Mean SE Mean StDev Variance Minimum Q1 Median Q3 Maximum Time (Seconds) 46.840 0.978 7.577 57.404 30.724 42.324 47.243 53.035 62.198 Variable Range Time (Seconds) 31.474

*Figure 15: Heat Stake: Statistics*

To compare the performance of operators, mean time taken by each operator is calculated. While comparing the results, we can observe that operator "F" has the highest cycle times at 54.02 seconds while Operator "E" takes the lest time to complete the task at 42.44 seconds.

### **Statistics**



#### *Figure 16: Heat Stake: Operator Performance Evaluation*

From the figure below, we can have a better understanding of the individual performance and see the variation between individual data points while also confirming that the data is distributed normally.



*Figure 17: Heat Stake: Histogram*

To check the highest mean time across all the operators, a box plot was generated. We can see that operator "F" has the highest mean time at 54.03 seconds for the heat stake operation.



*Figure 18: Heat Stake: Box plot*

### **Potter**

We can see from the overall statistics of the station across all the operators that the average time taken to complete the operation is 40.21 seconds with a standard deviation of 7.04 seconds.

### **Statistics**

Variable Mean SE Mean StDev Variance Minimum Q1 Median Q3 Maximum Time (Seconds) 40.208 0.909 7.038 49.532 16.769 35.610 40.349 44.297 58.400 Variable Range Time (Seconds) 41.631

#### *Figure 19: Potter: Statistics*

To compare the performance of operators, mean time taken by each operator is calculated. While comparing the results, we can observe that operator "C" has the highest cycle times at 44.45 seconds while Operator "E" takes the least time to complete the task at 37.93 seconds.



#### **Statistics**

*Figure 20: Potter: Operator Performance Evaluation*

From the figure below, we can have a better understanding of the individual performance and see the variation between individual data points while also confirming that the data is distributed normally.



#### *Figure 21: Potter: Histogram*

To check the highest mean time across all the operators, a box plot was generated. We can see that operator "C" has the highest mean time at 44.45 seconds for the potting operation.



*Figure 22: Potter: Box Plot*

## **Final Test**

We can see from the overall statistics of the station across all the operators that the average time taken to complete the operation is 32.74 seconds with a standard deviation of 3.5 seconds. Although there are two Final test stations present on the production line, which means that the overall cycle time for the station is 16.37 seconds.

Overall Cycle time = 
$$
\frac{32.74}{2}
$$

$$
= 16.37
$$
 **Seconds**

This makes it the station with the least cycle time for the line.

#### **Statistics**

Variable Mean SE Mean StDev Variance Minimum Q1 Median Q3 Maximum Time (Seconds) 32.744 0.462 3.578 24.248 30.441 32.862 35.279 12.805 41.021 Variable Range Time (Seconds) 16.773

#### *Figure 23: Final Test: Statistics*

To compare the performance of operators, mean time taken by each operator is calculated. While comparing the results, we can observe that operator "E" has the highest cycle times at 35.23 seconds while Operator "B" takes the least time to complete the task at 31.02 seconds.



## **Statistics**

#### *Figure 24: Final Test: Operator Performance Evaluation*

From the figure below, we can have a better understanding of the individual performance and see the variation between individual data points while also confirming that the data is distributed normally.



*Figure 25: Final Test: Histogram*

To check the highest mean time across all the operators, a box plot was generated. We can see that operator "E" has the highest mean time at 35.23 seconds for the potting operation.



*Figure 26: Final Test: Box Plot*

### **Pack Station**

We can see from the overall statistics of the station across all the operators that the average time taken to complete the operation is 17.23 seconds with a standard deviation of 2.8 seconds.

#### **Statistics**

Variable Mean SE Mean StDev Variance Minimum Q1 Median Q3 Maximum Time (Seconds) 17.231 0.367 2.839 8.061 9.916 15.123 17.116 19.153 25.600 Variable Range Time (Seconds) 15.684

#### *Figure 27: Pack Station: Statistics*

To compare the performance of operators, mean time taken by each operator is calculated. While comparing the results, we can observe that operator "F" has the highest cycle times at 19.96 seconds while Operator "B" takes the least time to complete the task at 15.73 seconds.

#### **Statistics**



*Figure 28: Pack Station: Operator Performance Evaluation*

From the figure below, we can have a better understanding of the individual performance and see the variation between individual data points while also confirming that the data is distributed normally.



*Figure 29: Pack Station: Histogram*

To check the highest mean time across all the operators, a box plot was generated. We can see that operator "F" has the highest mean time at 19.96 seconds for the potting operation.



*Figure 30: Pack Station: Box Plot*



After the analysis it can be observed that operator "F" is having a below satisfactory performance which is negatively affecting the overall output of the line.

Also, based on the data collected, a value stream map has been designed to get a better understanding of the entire assembly line.

Based on the bottleneck, we can theoretically calculate the production numbers per shift. Currently, the cycle time of our bottleneck station is 47.18 seconds, which means that there should be

> UPH (units per hour) =  $\frac{3600}{Cycle\ time\ (Bottleneck)}$ ⬚

$$
=\frac{3600}{47.18}=76.3
$$

Total units produced in one shift  $= 76.3 * 10$ 

 $= 763$  units

Efficiency  $=$   $\frac{Observed\ number\ of\ units\ produced}{E_{\text{max}} + E_{\text{max}} + E_{\text{max}}$ Expected number of units produced

$$
=\frac{402}{763}=0.53
$$

This means that our current production efficiency is at 53 percent.

## **4. Improve**

Based on the analyze phase, a few improvements were made. As witnessed, the performance of the operator "F" was negatively affecting the production line. One of the methods which could be opted for is to retrain the operator on the processes.

Although, due to the shortage of time this method could not be opted. So, operator "F" was replaced by another trained operator "X". Performance of operator "X" was also measured, and the time taken by Operator "X" to complete the solder operation is mentioned below. It is to be noted that the measurement was only needed for the solder station as it was facing the most amount of increased cycle time.



After this change, the solder station needs to be re-evaluated to confirm the results of the change. From the statistics of the updated time study, we can see that the mean cycle time of the process is reduced to 85 seconds.

#### **Statistics**

Variable Mean SE Mean StDev Variance Minimum Q1 Median Q3 Maximum Time (Seconds) 85.00 1.47 11.42 130.53 72.22 79.55 81.85 84.13 129.60 Variable Range Time (Seconds) 57.38

#### *Figure 31: Solder Station: Statistics (After Change)*

Since there are two solder stations present on the production line, this means that the overall cycle time for the station is 42.5 seconds.

Overall Cycle time = 
$$
\frac{85}{2}
$$

 $= 42.5$  Seconds

This now makes the heat stake station the bottleneck station for the line as that station has the highest mean cycle time at 46.8 seconds. While comparing the performance of operator "X" with other operators, the following results were observed.

According to this, expected number of units produced per shift should be 840 units.

UPH (units per hour)  $=$   $\frac{3600}{Cycle\ time\ (Bottleneck)}$ ⬚

$$
=\frac{3600}{42.5}=84.7
$$

Total units produced in one shift  $= 84.7 * 10$ 

 $= 840$  units

The performance of operator "X" is still below other operators as they have the highest amount of cycle time at 101.10 seconds which is nearly 20 seconds more than other operators with a standard deviation of 21.24 seconds. But, even after this we were able to reduce the overall cycle time of the process from 47.18 seconds to 42.5 seconds. The Histogram plot along with the box plot also confirms the results.



#### **Statistics**





*Figure 33: Solder Station: Histogram (After Change)*



*Figure 34: Solder Station: Box Plot (After Change)*

Also, the value stream map has been updated after the implementation of the suggested change. The below figure shows the updated value stream map.



From the below mentioned table we can see that the average number of units produced per shift is 585 units.



To calculate the efficiency of the production line, the expected number of units produced should be based on the updated bottleneck which is the heat stake station.

> UPH (units per hour) =  $\frac{3600}{Cycle\ time\ (Bottleneck)}$ ⬚

$$
=\frac{3600}{46.8}=76.9
$$

Total units produced in one shift  $= 76.9 * 10$ 

 $= 769$  units

Efficiency  $=$   $\frac{Observed\ number\ of\ units\ produced}{E_{\text{max}} + E_{\text{max}} + E_{\text{max}}$ Expected number of units produced

$$
=\frac{585}{769}=0.76
$$

After the improvement, production efficiency of the line has increased from 53 percent to 76 percent.

Apart from this there are a few more recommendations which can be made to improve the production efficiency and increase the production numbers of the line. These recommendations are on the heat stake station as this is the bottleneck station. Currently these changes cannot be implemented on the production line as production will need to be halted to implement these changes. Since the company is focusing on over-producing now to cope with the customer demands during the plant shut down, production lines cannot be stopped. The first recommendation is to add another heat stake machine on the line, which will reduce the cycle time of the station to half since the other machine is the identical machine. This means that the updated cycle time would be 23.2 seconds for the station which will again make the solder station as the bottleneck. In that situation the expected production number would be the same as mentioned above at 840 units per shift.

Another recommendation is to replace the heat stake machine with another heat stake machine which has the known cycle time of 36 seconds. In this case as well, the updated bottle neck station would be the solder station and the expected production numbers would remain same at 840 units per shift. In both the situations the overall production numbers are expected to improve.



Value stream maps have also been updated according to the proposed changes in the heat stake station. The updated value stream maps can be found below.





## **5. Control**

The Control Phase includes the necessary measures to manage the achieved improvements and guarantee the development of a culture of continuous improvement. One of one such measures taken is the creation and maintenance of control charts which include the upper and lower control limits. As seen from the chart below, one of the points is out of the control limit which means that the situation needs to be addressed. Some other things that are included in the control phase are mentioned below:

Apart from that a Communication Plan was also created where in team lead/members can contact the designated engineers as per the requirements.

- 1. Technicians were required to follow maintenance procedures and safety checks before each shift. Team lead can contact the technicians if further assistance is needed.
- 2. In case of an operator unavailability, team lead has been directed to contact the human resource department.
- 3. In-case of receiving defective housings from the suppliers, team lead is directed to contact quality engineer or operations manager.
- 4. Similarly, for epoxy spillage near potter station, team lead has been directed to contact the Janitors as soon as possible.







*Figure 35: Solder Station: X-Bar S Chart*

## **Results**

The outcomes for each phase of the DMAIC process are mentioned below.

- 1. Define: The outline of the project was defined by identifying our goal to increase the production numbers from 402 units per shift to 770 units per shift. It was required to conduct the time study on every station of the line while also documenting the performance of the operators.
- 2. Measure: Time study on each line was conducted and the data was measured as per the requirements. The average cycle time for each station is mentioned below.



3. Analyze: In the Analyze phase, the solder station was identified as the bottleneck station with an average cycle time of 47.18 seconds. Upon further consideration, it was witnessed that the average cycle time for Operator F was 157.21 seconds. The overall production efficiency was found to be 53%.

- 4. Improve: Operator F was replaced with Operator X, and it was found out that Operator X is 56 seconds quicker than Operator F. The overall cycle time of solder station reduced to 42.5 seconds and the production numbers increased to 585 units per shift.
- 5. Control: Use of X-bar S chart has been made mandatory for every station to see any outliers from the control limits. A communication matrix was also developed to keep the team and the management in better contact with each other.



## **Conclusion**

DMAIC process was used to overcome the challenge of increasing production numbers. Successful results were observed after the successful implementation of the suggested improvisations.

- To find the bottleneck station, a time study was conducted for each station on the assembly line while also documenting the performance of the operators.
- Solder station was the bottleneck station in the current phase where most of the negative impact was due the inefficiency of operator "F".
- Operator "F" was replaced with operator "X" and the overall cycle time of the process was reduced to 42.5 seconds which meant that the updated bottleneck station was heat stake station. The production efficiency was increased to 76  $\%$ .
- To reduce the cycle time on heat stake station, one of the suggested changes was to replace the heat stake machine with the updated machine which will reduce the cycle time of the station to 36 seconds.
- Another suggested change was to include another heat stake machine in the line which will reduce the cycle time of the station to 23.2 seconds and the updated bottleneck station will be the solder station with a cycle time of 42.5 seconds.

The successful implementation of the DMAIC process has increased the production numbers by nearly 200 units per shift, which could be improved if the suggested improvements are implemented.

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# **Appendix**

Here are the time studies used in the experimentation.







## 2. Time Study for Solder Station







## 3. Time Study for Assembly Station



4. Time Study for Heat Stake Station







5. Time Study for Potter Station





6. Time Study for Final Test Station







7. Time Study for Pack Station



