

CASE STUDY: WABTEC



A2B EXCELLENCE



SUMMARY

- Performance Capture
- Workforce Engagement
- Ideal Precursor to Lean
- Low-tech, great results!

ABOUT THE CLIENT

American-based Wabtec traces its history back to the legendary Westinghouse engineering corporation. In the UK, Wabtec has operations centres in Eastleigh and Doncaster; and the Doncaster operation has developed a world-class reputation for handling the life extension, overhaul, maintenance and refurbishment of railway rolling stock.

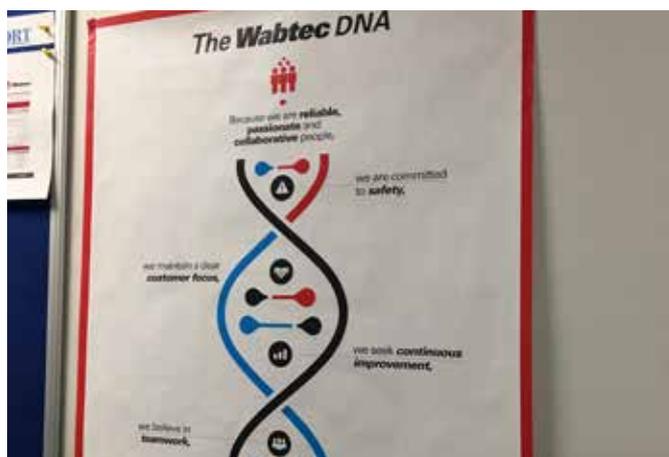
THE CHALLENGE

Wabtec's richly deserved reputation for craftsmanship has led to several new contracts, including the Greater Anglia 3-2-1 fleet refurbishment project. However, because delivery was reliant on non-repeatable processes, it was becoming economically unviable. Efficiencies were required to significantly slash the time taken to deliver a refurbished train – but without sidelining Wabtec's artisan skills.

Furthermore, the practices required for this step-change in productivity would have to happen without losing highly professional staff to competitors (the Midlands is home to the UK rail industry, and prestige projects like HS2 have created ample demand for talented staff). We were invited by Wabtec and partners Eversholt Rail Group to recommend a roadmap to improvement.

OUR SOLUTION

Wabtec had been filling its resource gaps with expensive overtime on demand; which would be unsustainable in the long term. Rather than recommending a set of potentially expensive operational restructures, our approach was to recognise that the business had not identified the root causes of inefficiency. We demonstrated that whilst a Lean Transformation project would be the ultimate goal, this would only be successful with a deep quantification of current performance to independently measure process efficiency. Only then could managers and teams discuss possible improvements in an impartial way to develop Leaner working practices. Plus, with better visibility, we felt that quick-win improvements would become apparent without further upheaval.



WHAT WE DID

Our Principal Consultant created a standardised daily performance capture system, using the best of existing Lean practice but customised to account for Wabtec's existing on-the-ground processes and operational constraints. In this way, performance measurement was embedded painlessly into day-to-day activities – in fact our work was so transparent that we were able to modify our reporting systems 'in flight', with zero disruption.

We also designed Visual Management formats so that everyone from engineers, team leaders, shift managers and project leads could extract actionable information with no more investment than Excel and a few minutes each day.

Finally, we contributed to a communication campaign to reassure staff that the project was crucial to driving Wabtec's future profitability.



RESULTS

In a two month engagement, we demonstrated that over 50% of lost hours (planned activities which ultimately could not be executed) were not on the management radar, and thus were pouring away value. With our data capture system and daily, weekly and periodic reports, we gave the management team the information they needed to build a 'Mission Control' to drive change.

Deep process change is hard. However, by surfacing and analysing data, we helped Engineering and Purchasing teams to gain visibility, reprioritise activity, and therefore improve outcomes without re-engineering the processes themselves; and this has yielded extraordinary quick wins. Lost hours are down by 38% - representing a huge incremental increase in efficiency and profitability.

BENEFITS

- Rapid efficiency improvements
- One referenceable source of the truth
- Easy, turnkey benchmarking
- Pain-free implementation in a live environment
- Low-maturity visual tools: insight that everyone can use
- Opportunity to focus on the same issues across the organisation
- Lean-ready insight: common understanding, clear purpose and mission, shared objectives
- An environment for engaged change rather than top-down/mandated change



WORK WITH A2B

A2B Excellence is devoted to building high-performance teams which meet both the expectations of the business and the career ambitions of team members. We help people at all levels to work together to get their projects over the line, creating efficiency, productivity, and happier workplaces. Our work has been independently validated to save thousands of man-days and millions of pounds.

We're an award-winning team with over 30 years' facilitation experience in complex and challenging employee environments across the private, public and mixed sectors. Our work has been recognised with awards from the Chartered Institute of Professional Development and three consecutive global awards for employee engagement. We are only too pleased to help, so get in touch to find out how we can help you achieve more with the team you already have.

A2B joined our collaborative support team on GA 3-2-1, alongside PwC, and showed great flexibility and client understanding in working around Wabtec's operational challenges and priorities. They have delivered an essential foundation intervention, which has given us the insight and evidence base to build Lean efficiencies for the next evolution of our business.

*Chris Jenner, Programme Manager,
Eversholt Rail Group*

