

Snapshot



Kevin Curry

Lean cuisine

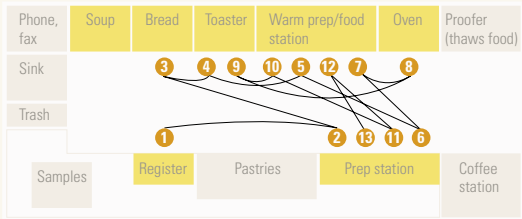
John R. McPherson and Adrian V. Mitchell

Proven techniques from manufacturing might be the recipe for improving productivity in restaurants.

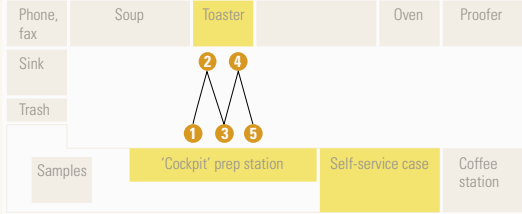
Beset by waste and operational variability, food service operators are taking a page from industrial manufacturers and applying lean-production approaches to their own operations. Lean techniques seek to improve product and service quality while simultaneously reducing waste and labor costs. For food service operators, the additional trick is to link such improvements to customer loyalty. For one operator, this effort meant tackling unpredictable demand and excessive error rates and wait times (ten minutes for simple sandwiches) on orders. The operator mapped daily changes in demand to highlight fluctuations, introduced a self-service counter, and redesigned kitchen and food preparation procedures to standardize sandwich making and eliminate waste, which consequently fell by 40 percent. Meanwhile, labor costs dropped by 15 percent and service times improved by one-third. Best of all, sales increased by 5 percent and margins on affected products more than doubled, since employees could spend more time influencing customers and less time apologizing to them.

Service steps for fulfilling order (example: hot chicken sandwich)

Before improvements



After improvements



Time to prepare before/after improvements, minutes, seconds

Breakfast sandwich

Before 2:15

After 1:24

Lunch sandwich

Before 3:10

After 1:59