

Leading Chemicals Company Digitizes Kanban Boards, Resulting in Massive Cycle Time and Backlog Reductions

Customer:

Leading Refining and Chemicals Company

Industry:

Energy

Geographies:

U.S. and Canada

Employees:

5,000

Planview Solution:

Work Management with Planview LeanKit™

Planview Product

Planview LeanKit™

CHALLENGE

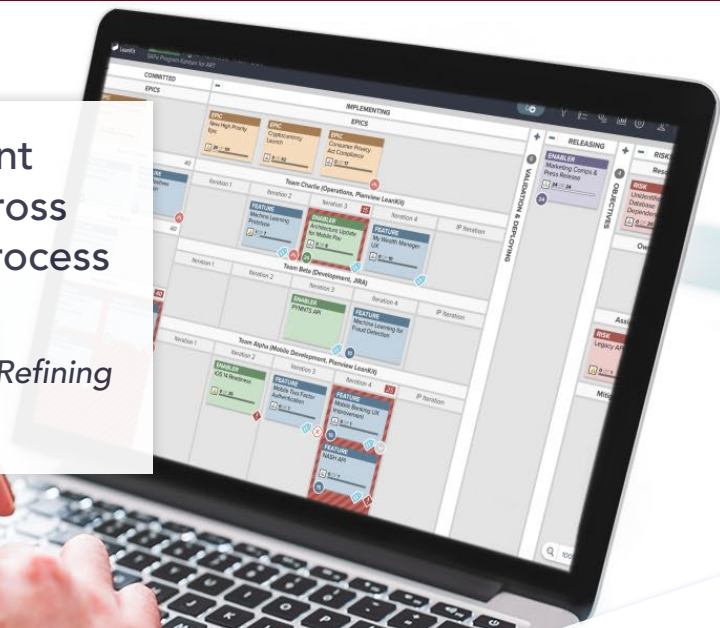
In an effort to adopt Lean principles in their approach to completing work, this leading refining and chemicals company recognized the limitations of physical Kanban boards to manage their complex workflows, processes, and staffing options. With cycle times in excess of 100 days, growing backlogs, and increasing costs, the organization's Maintenance group looked for a solution that would streamline work management and modernize how they visualized work.

SOLUTION

Planview's Enterprise Kanban solution (LeanKit™) helps this organization visualize and optimize their maintenance processes and has become essential in how they run many areas of their business. Since implementation of the digital Kanban boards, the Maintenance group has experienced dramatic reductions in cycle times and backlogs as they are able to respond faster, identify issues before they cause delays, and reduce costs by delivering work on time with more insourced resources.

"We are getting more efficient because we can see work across the plant and visualize our process to continually improve it."

– Area Workflow Specialist, US-based Refining and Chemicals Company



Challenge: Visualizing Work to Adhere to Lean Principles

After experiencing the oil and gas industry rollercoaster over the past decade, this maker of everything from biofuels to polymers created an initiative to continue improving its Lean processes to remain agile. Rigid work processes remained, creating long cycle times, large backlogs, and resource constraints. Visual work management became a priority to add controls and reduce backlogs, but their “War Room” consisted of four walls covered floor-to-ceiling in a dizzying array of multi-colored sticky notes that often fell off. Unless people were physically in the War Room, they did not know the status of work. Status inquiry calls required someone to locate the specific work on the wall and report back, creating an atmosphere of inefficiency and frustration.

Solution: Keeping Everyone on the Same Page with Virtual Kanban Boards

One group within the organization had been successfully using LeanKit’s Kanban boards to manage their work and processes. An Area Workflow Specialist in the Maintenance group evaluated LeanKit with their direct supervisor to see if it would fit their specific needs and help them fully realize the benefits of Lean. They created LeanKit board layouts for their teams as a pilot before moving all five Maintenance areas to the same basic board structure. While leadership was accustomed to using physical Kanban boards to visualize work, they immediately saw the benefits of digitizing boards to see how work progresses.

“All work requests Maintenance receives get updated daily,” explains the Area Workflow Specialist.

“Operations can look at the digital board to see what they need to plan for the next day instead of waiting for a report. We assign technicians to different jobs and everyone can see where each project is in its lifecycle, who did what and when, what’s coming up, and so much more – all without stepping foot into the War Room.”

The Area Workflow Specialist and the Lean team mapped out the Maintenance group’s workflow process, simplifying it from the past.

While boards are customizable per group or team, users can see work boards across the entire enterprise for greater clarity, alignment, and understanding of other

activities and how their work contributes to business objectives.

The Maintenance group uses an API to pull data out of LeanKit and their work order management system and into Power BI to create custom dashboards and reports to track performance and identify risks. “The reporting and analytics we now have with integrated LeanKit data are driving our quest for continuous improvement,” says the Area Workflow Specialist. “From individual team members to managers and executives, we have the real-time information we all need to deliver at the highest levels.”

Results: Greater Efficiency, Productivity, and Process Improvements

Since implementing Planview LeanKit, the Maintenance team reduced cycle times from 180 days to just 27, and work order backlogs have decreased from around 9,000 to about 3,000. Work orders always begin on the board instead of requiring multiple emails and calls, and the team has been able to dramatically reduce the number of “emergency” work requests. They have reduced the number of contractors and insource instead, reducing costs and leveraging the skills of their talented team members. “We are getting more efficient because we can see work across the plant and visualize our process to continually improve it,” says the Area Workflow Specialist. “Work that took two weeks now takes four days with better quality and less rework. We are responding faster and are more focused on the things that are important to our group and the company.”

Future: Expanding Planview LeanKit for a Leaner Enterprise

Other groups within the company have either adopted or are exploring Planview’s Enterprise Kanban solution for everything from project management to ideation. As the industry continues to be volatile, this producer of fuels and chemicals has another tool in their arsenal to help them adapt, shifting priorities and resources as needed with full visibility into workflows, dependencies, and progress. “Even though our different groups have slightly different processes, LeanKit allows them all to visualize their work in a standardized way without conforming to one homogeneous process or methodology,” says the Area Workflow Specialist. “This will help us adhere to the Lean principle of continuous improvement.”

To learn more about what Planview® solutions can do for your organization, visit [Planview.com](https://www.planview.com).

