

Four days with SCHULER – Productivity increased by 10%

What makes the business concept of a company in the furniture industry so successful that it will survive and stay up with competition? An essential element constitutes the continuous process improvement – and that in all departments of the company. Ideally, the continuous process improvement is integrated into the daily routine and has become an integral part in the objectives of the employees. This, however, is not always easy to put into practice.

Workshops with external moderators are an efficient way of enhancing optimization initiatives. This was one of the main reasons why the kitchen manufacturer Beckermann located in Cappeln has chosen this option. In cooperation with a consultant from SCHULER Consulting GmbH the productivity could be increased by approx. 10% during a workshop running over 4 days. Several employees from different departments in the company were chosen to participate in this work shop.

Prior to the workshop a definite work area was determined for the optimization. The choice fell on a production island where plinths for kitchens were manufactured – detached from the highly automated batch size 1 production line. This workplace consisted of a multitude of workstations. The target: The efficient engineering of the workplace according to the 5 S Principle (sorting, placing (arranging), cleanliness, standardization, self-discipline). In addition, the decision was taken together with the employees to raise the awareness for the principle of the continuous improvement.

In the first step the team analyzed the workplace using different analyzing tools from the workplace engineering. Simultaneously an activity analysis in

according to the “EKUV” Principle (eliminate, combine, reorganize, simplify) was performed together with an analysis of internal routes. At the same time the employees were familiarized with the basic principles of the “5S” Philosophy. Thus the preconditions were created for that the employees always have in mind the optimization of their own workplace and scrutinize the internal processes – even after the workshop. Based on the results of the analysis, the workshop team filtered the core problems and then elaborated the appropriate solution approaches. This included the elaboration of several versions for a future layout of the workplace concerned and its qualitative assessment.

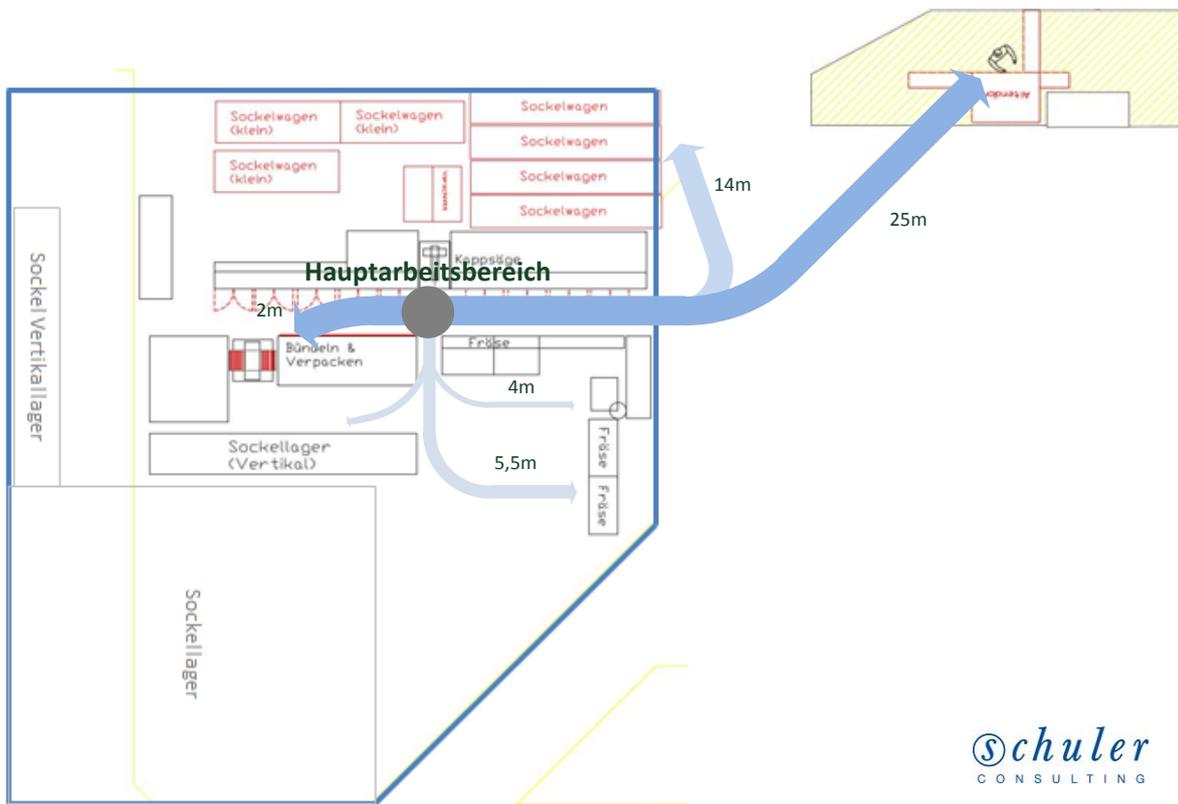
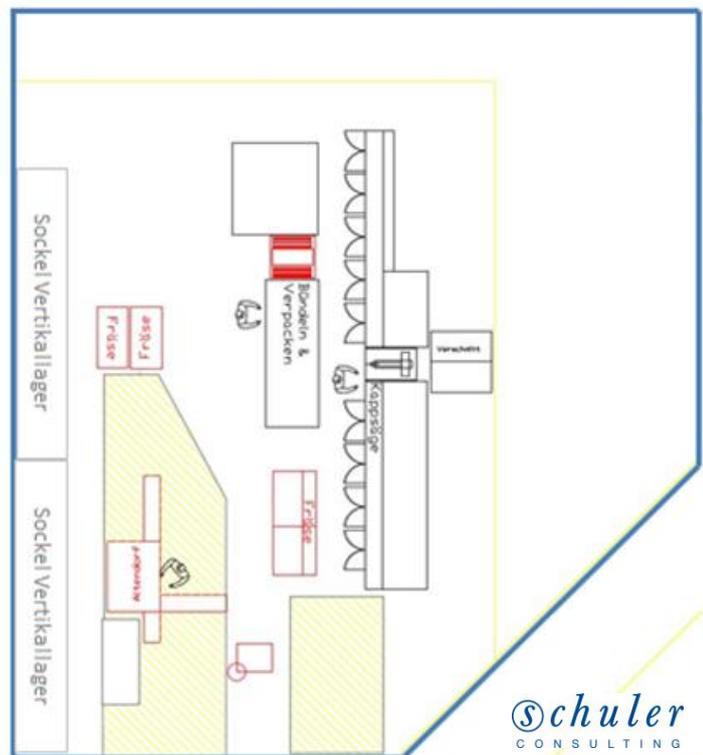


Fig 1: Schematic representation of the kilometrage performance during one job run

The brainstorming process was followed by the selection of the actions to be taken. The following measures were already implemented during the four days:

- Alignment of the material flow in one direction which resulted in a significant saving of space by eliminating unnecessary internal routes.
- Arrangement of the workplace in such a way that it may be used by two employees simultaneously.
- Material storage at a central place allowing using the production area more efficiently.
- Introduction of a “kanban” control for consumables – simplifies the information flow and reduces routes of transport.
- Arrangement of the machines in line with their frequency of use resulting in a considerably reduced kilometrage performance in a job run.
- Sorting out the tools which are no longer required. All tools required at the workplace were assigned a defined place.

The result: By reorganizing the layout and integrating all machines into the work system, the company Beckermann Küchen saves now 65 % of the required kilometrage performances in standard orders. This means that the workplace operator disposes of up to 40 minutes more productive time (per shift) with an average order processing time of 8 minutes. In addition there are the measures with regard to order and cleanliness.



A great part of the tools and material was sorted out by placing the required tools in a useful way. In order to avoid unnecessary process interruptions due to search operations or the absence of material required.

The example of workplace optimization in the company Beckermann Küchen shows clearly that little effort is sufficient for achieving economic effects in a work process. The involvement of the employees results in a simultaneous performance enhancement, interfaces are optimized and waste is reduced significantly by eliminating the non-value adding activities. The consultants from SCHULER Consulting GmbH transfer their experiences gained in other sectors to the woodworking and furniture industry. Structured approaches from the analysis through to the implementation ensure a short realization time, enhanced productivity and efficient well-engineered workplaces.

The genius in matters of individual consulting

The strength of SCHULER Consulting GmbH lies in the comprehensive range of individual consulting solutions for the woodworking and furniture industry. The company focuses on management consulting, factory design, process optimization, product engineering and design, quality assurance, HR consulting and controlling. The company employs approx. 15 consultants providing worldwide on-site support at any place where furniture and components are being manufactured. In addition to the German locations Pfalzgrafenweiler and Herzebrock, SCHULER Consulting GmbH is represented in Spain, China and Russia.

	Length of kilometrage performance per standard order	Average kilometrage performance (determined in acc. to "EKUV" and aligned to standard values)	Time spent per order (movement)	Input per shift based on 8 min. per shift
old condition	115m	1,8 m/s	64 seconds	1 hour 4 minutes 6,9 Kilometric performance
new condition	40m	1,8 m/s	23 seconds	23 minutes 2,4 Kilometric performance

Sources for photo material: SCHULER Consulting GmbH

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