

11 Lean Manufacturing Quotes to Inspire You

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“Lean manufacturing” is one of those buzzwords that float around the maintenance and manufacturing world — and with good reason. Applied properly, the concept of “lean” can help companies become more competitive, reduce waste, and, ultimately, increase profits. To help you stay in the “lean” mood, we discuss the meaning of this trend and I’ll share with you 11 inspiring manufacturing quotes to keep you motivated and focused on the task at hand.

Before we dive into our awe-inspiring lean manufacturing quotes, let’s take a minute to truly understand what it means to be lean from a maintenance perspective. Essentially, “lean thinking” is a method — a way of life, really — whereby maintenance managers and manufacturers look to reduce waste and, by association, cost.

From a maintenance perspective, waste can be considered to be anything from over-ordering spare parts to having an inefficient preventative maintenance plan, machinery downtime, and even failing to employ the use of a computerized maintenance management system — a great tool that is crucial to any lean maintenance process.

Finally, lean maintenance is a mindset that focuses on being proactive in your maintenance approach and setting up scheduled maintenance and preventative maintenance tasks that help ensure that your operation runs smoothly and with as few hiccups as possible.

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Now that we understand a little bit about lean maintenance and manufacturing, let's take a moment to be reflective and draw inspiration from the following lean quotes.

One of my favorite quotes is: *"If you don't have time to do it right, you must have time to do it over."* Basically, this quote by John Wooden means do the job right or you will waste time having to do it over (and possibly over and over) again.

C.D. Jackson once said, *"Great ideas need landing gears as well as wings."* This is especially true for PM and maintenance plans. It is one thing to know where your project begins, but be sure to know how it ends as well.

You may have heard this next quote: *"Invest a few moments in thinking. It will pay good interest."* At the end of the day, maintenance programs — and especially those with lean thinking — are all about taking time to properly plan out your strategies. It's valuable advice.

Another great, clever quote can be attributed to Harvey MacKay, who once quipped, *"Don't water your weeds."* In short, instead of feeding bad ideas or processes, grab them by the root and weed them out!

By their very nature, efficiency experts can come on a bit strong and opinionated, and sometimes, they seem to over-think things, which can lead to frustration among workers and add a dehumanizing feel to the work environment. Always be mindful that your staff are valuable assets as well, or you may find them thinking along the same lines as Al Diamond: *"If all efficiency experts were laid end to end, I'd be in favor of it."* A similar quote by Felix Frankfurter sums it up nicely: *"I don't like a man to be too efficient. He's likely to be not human enough."*

Charles C. Noble proved his forward-thinking ways when he quipped: *"You must have long-range goals to keep you from being frustrated by short-term failures."* We all encounter setbacks, but harping on them gets us nowhere. Instead, focus on the long-term goal and steer toward it no matter what storms pop up in your path.

Sometimes we are presented with what seems to be an impossible task, but out of such situations, ingenious solutions can often arise. Don't let the difficulty of a task prevent you from tackling it, or as Jim Goodwin once famously said, *"The impossible is often the untried."*

A pretty clever — and very true — quote we can all learn from comes from the mouth of C. Northcote Parkinson, who stated: *"Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion."* Lean maintenance means cutting out waste, and one huge area of waste is in time employees spend on jobs. Make sure your staff understands the amount of time projects should take, and keep logs of how long they actually take. If a worker is performing too slowly at one task (and is not just stretching the work out), put them somewhere they can shine instead.

We talk a lot about planning in the maintenance industry, and Lawrence J. Peter sums up why it is so important rather nicely: *"If you don't know where you are*

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going, you will probably end up somewhere else.”

Finally, where would a list of quotes be without the addition of one of the world's greatest minds? Albert Einstein changed not only the world but the way it thinks. He didn't just take science or the views of his peers at face value. Instead, he challenged those views and was willing to look at the world in a different way. You should do the same with your maintenance views. As the crazy-haired genius once stated: *“The world we have created is a product of our thinking; it cannot be changed without changing our thinking.”*

Lisa Richards is an experienced professional in the field of industrial management and is an avid blogger about maintenance management systems and productivity innovation. Richards' undergraduate degree in Industrial Engineering opened the door for her initial career path with a Midwest-based agricultural implement manufacturer with global market reach.

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