



Systematic approach benefits biotech

By becoming more systematic in its overall approach to business, a biotechnology drug producer, with help from Celerant Consulting, increased its manufacturing capacity by more than 35%, without additional new hires

Opportunity Knocks

The global biotechnology industry – currently worth about \$75 billion – is highly competitive and fast moving. Company value is predicated on the success of drug trials. Gaining a market presence as rapidly as possible for those drugs that make the grade is paramount, to recoup the massive R&D investment entailed.

A pharmaceutical manufacturing group found itself facing unprecedented production needs at the North American facility where it produces its primary biotechnology product.

The most pressing challenge for this life science company was finding the staff for two new manufacturing facilities. Each would require 150-200 additional trained personnel, very quickly.

The “quick fix” would have been to make temporary staffing changes, putting a longer term solution – head hunting, retraining, and reorganising – on the back burner until things “settled down”.

But the Vice President of Operations decided otherwise.

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

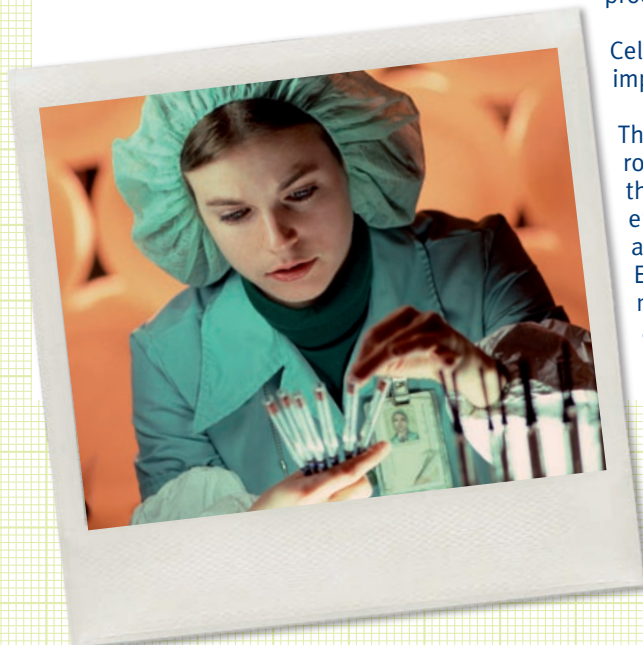
The biotech industry as a whole is still a relatively young industry. The first biotech drug, human insulin, was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration as recently as 1982.

So there is some room in most biotech companies for maturing: weeding out processes and practices that had been adopted on an ad hoc basis to become more streamlined and efficient.

The life science company in North America engaged Celerant Consulting (Celerant) to look at its operations. The quest was to find any and all areas where efficiency could be improved. This knowledge would underpin a more rational decision about exactly how many extra staff were going to be needed for the required increase in production.

Results

- Release cycle time reduced from an average of 260 to 73 days
- Turnaround times decreased from an average of 23 to 10 days
- 40% reduction in process downtime
- 20% reduction in process DERs (deviation event records, or ‘defects’)
- 18% reduction in unit cost



Celerant uncovered two important findings.

The current operations had room for efficiency gains that would free up enough employees to fully staff the additional new facilities. Expanding production did not actually require hiring and training any additional people.

Realising the potential efficiency gains meant adopting a new way of working across the company. The operating culture needed to become more cross-functional, and more businesslike.

“Celerant’s analysis showed we were performing below our potential. Like most of Biotech, we were still some distance from being a Lean Manufacturing organisation.” Senior Vice President, Operations

WHERE TO START

For any organisation the hardest aspect of becoming more businesslike is knowing where to start.

Celerant helped the company's senior staff to identify the right key performance indicators (KPIs) to track.

The team then designed a Management System (Celerant's proprietary MCRS®) that would enable the company to raise performance in a coordinated and sustainable way.

The purpose of the MCRS® was to make sure people were aligned and working collaboratively on priority issues. So its designers made it comprehensive in its scope, including meetings, reports, dialogues, and desired behaviours as well.

Implementation of the MCRS® was the task of eight cross-functional, multi-level project teams.

HAND IN HAND

Celerant consultants worked with all the implementation teams, tracking and pursuing execution on a daily basis. The consultants helped the teams to stay fully focused on reaching milestones on schedule, and integrating activities across the implementation teams.

In the implementation team for Production, Celerant coached employees on using powerful tools such as cycle time compression, root cause analysis, a master turnaround schedule and turnaround KPIs.

The implementation team for Quality focused on cutting the cycle time for product release. The new ways of working revealed a major bottleneck in compliance procedures, with overly prolonged paper chasing between Quality Control and Production personnel. Other aspects of cycle time (e.g. between fermentation and purification) also allowed significant room for improvement.

Implementing the MCRS® reduced average cycle time by 72%. At the same time, defect rates were reduced by one-fifth.

Meanwhile, the team concentrating on the original issue – staffing the new facilities – were able to resource the rapid expansion in capacity with almost 200 fewer people than originally thought.

"We chose to focus on the opportunity rather than waste time being defensive. The analysis gave us a clear sense of what we should tackle first. Our goals were ambitious. We decided Celerant should work with us to execute the actions we mapped out together." Vice President, Operations

"We took no short cuts to achieve our production goals. Quite the opposite – the quality of our product has never rested on such a solid foundation." Vice President, Operations

*Our Results are
Front Page News*



"We are now more consistently proactive in our decision making, and we have much greater visibility of operational performance, down to the level of daily and even hourly goals. That gives us more confidence that the right things are happening, up and down the organisation." Senior Vice President, Operations

"Because of our success in working with Celerant, we will sustain and even accelerate our performance improvements. We make decisions faster. And those decisions are more rigorously based on real ground level data." Vice President, Operations

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