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Industrial distributor applies lean to the MRO purchasing process

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The U.S. Patent Office has approved the trademark Lean Procurement, a strategic service and approach for maintenance, repair and operations (MRO) purchasing developed by Consumers Interstate Corp., an industrial distributor in Norwich, Conn.

“Lean Procurement is a strong complement to companies’ lean manufacturing activities,” says Kenn Fischburg, president of Consumers Interstate. “It applies similar strategies to cut the fat and build lean muscle and smooth flow in this often overlooked area of purchasing, which involves activities from inventory control to accounts payable.

Fischburg says that the Lean Procurement is about more than continuous improvement. “It’s a powerful rethink and redesign of the whole procurement process that yields dramatic results, top and bottom line.”

Lean Procurement begins with an analysis that reveals all the choke points, overlaps and wasted activities, and exactly where and how purchasing operations can save significant time, costs and paperwork for MRO items. Then it lays out a detailed road map, and offers expert help from Consumers to put a faster, easier and online procurement process in place, including employee training.

“Our end goal is to get customers deep into what we call a ‘lean zone’ across all their operational activities and not just the usual manufacturing ones,” says Fischburg.

Consumers Interstate’s Priority Program uses the Internet to help simplify procurement for its customers. The company also provides an online resource for businesses to more efficiently manage their supplies purchase at <http://www.supersupplies.com/> and a retail supply site at <http://www.toiletpaperworld.com/>. ■