



---

## Duo push new lean, mean parts machine

---

The Plain Dealer - Cleveland, Ohio

Author:	Thomas W. Gerdel
Date:	Nov 22, 2002
Start Page:	C.2
Section:	Business
Document Types:	News
Text Word Count:	544

---

*(Copyright (c) The Plain Dealer 2002)*

Distribution zones: All

Two Cleveland entrepreneurs want to hitch their wagon to the lean- manufacturing trend.

Their fledgling company, Kinetic Technologies LLC, is using an old inner-city plant to build wagons for carrying parts and materials inside factories instead of using lift trucks.

John Neumann and Larry Tyler say the simple steel wagons can help speed the flow of materials to the assembly line and are designed to reduce physical strains on workers.

The wagons, each capable of carrying a ton of parts, have special wheels so they can be easily pushed or pulled by a worker. They can be equipped with a revolving turntable and a mechanical lift to bring parts and supplies to within easy reach of a machine operator or assembly line worker.

"In this way, workers can avoid too much reaching and bending," said Neumann, vice president of operations.

General Motors Corp. has ordered 90 wagons for its new truck engine plant in Tonawanda, N.Y. A plant official who asked not to be named said the dollies will be used to haul parts to the assembly lines as part of the company's lean-manufacturing strategy.

By pulling two dollies at a time with small electric carts, twice the number of parts can be delivered to the lines compared with lift trucks, and they are considered safer to use than trucks because the driver's vision won't be blocked. All of them will be equipped with rollers so pallets of parts can be rolled off easily.

Delphi Automotive Systems Corp. has ordered some prototypes for its brake assemblies plant in Saginaw, Mich., that's being converted to lean manufacturing, Neumann said. Kinetic also is making prototypes for another auto-related company.

Currently, the start-up enterprise is making the wagons at American Mine Door Co. at East 67th Street and Quincy Avenue.

Tyler, who is president of Kinetic and a retired executive of Lincoln Electric Co., teamed up with Neumann to start the company early this year.

"We wanted to focus on lean manufacturing," said Tyler, who like Neumann is 54 years old and an engineer.

Lean manufacturing - improving the movement and flow of products to cut costs and reduce inventories - has been around for three decades. But the concept has taken on more urgency now that many American producers are operating their plants far below capacity and are under more pressure to reduce costs.

"If you have an economic slowdown, there's much more emphasis on cutting costs," said Charles Watts, professor of

management at the Boler School of Business at John Carroll University.

Watts said major companies such as automakers have taken the lead in implementing lean manufacturing, and now the practice is spreading to smaller companies in the supply chain.

Like its customers, Kinetic Technologies looks to operate in a lean manner itself. In addition to outsourcing production and some other services such as marketing, both Tyler and Neumann, the firm's only employees, work from their homes.

"We'll be hiring more people as we begin to grow," said Tyler, who was on the road this week visiting prospective customers in Dayton and in Canada. He estimates the payroll could increase to 30 to 50 people "based on how good a selling job we do."

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter:

[tgerdel@plained.com](mailto:tgerdel@plained.com), 216-999-4114

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.