

## GODFREY HIRST LEADERS IN CARPET



Their carpets may be soft but Godfrey Hirst has always been a hard player in a tough industry. After all, they've survived for more than 140 years amid increasing competition, reducing tariff protection and changing consumer tastes. Yet Godfrey Hirst continues to thrive as a major player, leaving many of its

competitors by the wayside as it grows from strength to strength.

Godfrey Hirst was established in 1865 in Geelong to manufacture woven fabrics from Western District wool, and today manufactures high quality carpets and floor coverings from a variety of natural and synthetic fibres. The company has led the industry through product innovation and vertical integration. The company now produces both woollen and synthetic carpets and owns woollen and synthetic spinners, including Fibremakers.



Tim Maishman (above), Group Operations Officer at Godfrey Hirst, shared his thoughts with us about how he plans to lead Godfrey Hirst's operations to yet greater strengths by:

### 1. Staying attuned to customer needs and wants.

Carpet stirs the emotions of its customers, especially those buying for the home, because it is highly visible, making a major impact on room aesthetics. A large part of customer value is therefore based on the purchasing experience rather than just measurable qualities of the product. Availability, quality and service also contribute to the customer experience. It is important, then, to tune the business so that it delivers value as perceived by the customer. Godfrey Hirst achieves this by developing an appreciation for the customers' needs through market research and retailer feedback and also establishing and setting market standards for delivery lead times, quality and service.

### 2. Aligning processes and systems to deliver value.

Tim is a strong believer in the Lean Thinking approach across all areas of the business. Although Godfrey Hirst has long had improvement programs, Tim is gradually introducing the Lean philosophy. Many managers have attended training workshops, AME events and Innovation Insights visits to gain exposure to new ideas. Tim has initiated a 5 S program, starting with a successful implementation at Benalla Spinners. Tim believes that 5 S is a powerful first step in changing the culture of an organisation through involvement, giving employees responsibility for their work areas. Tim has also initiated projects on reducing changeover times, increasing flow, reducing inventory and reducing waste, improving product development, improving raw material quality and improving in-process quality.

### 3. Aligning structure with strategy.

Tim is also working on ensuring the structure of Operations supports his strategy. This means ensuring roles and responsibilities are clearly linked to the strategy, making sure the right people are in the right jobs and the jobs are organised to maximise efficiency. For example since Lean is a fundamental strategy, Tim has established a Quality and Improvement Manager role and plans to rotate suitable candidates through this position regularly, thereby providing management focus on Lean and continuous improvement as well as giving a range of people experience developing and managing the improvement process.

### 4. Innovating with products and processes.

In many long-established companies the knowledge is held by a few long-serving and experienced employees, especially where the technology is considered more of an art than a science. In these cultures you will often hear "we tried that before and it didn't work", as innovation is stifled and newcomers give up trying as the experienced hands maintain the status quo. Godfrey Hirst has experienced its share of this problem but Tim doesn't believe in sacred cows, he wants everything challenged.

### 5. Measuring performance.

Another key area for Tim is ensuring there is a comprehensive measurement system that reflects and supports Godfrey Hirst's strategies. In an approach similar to the Balanced Scorecard, Tim measures the fundamentals such as financial performance, occupational health and safety, quality and environmental performance, coupled with measures of efficiency and waste, IFOT (In Full & On Time delivery), customer satisfaction and service response time.