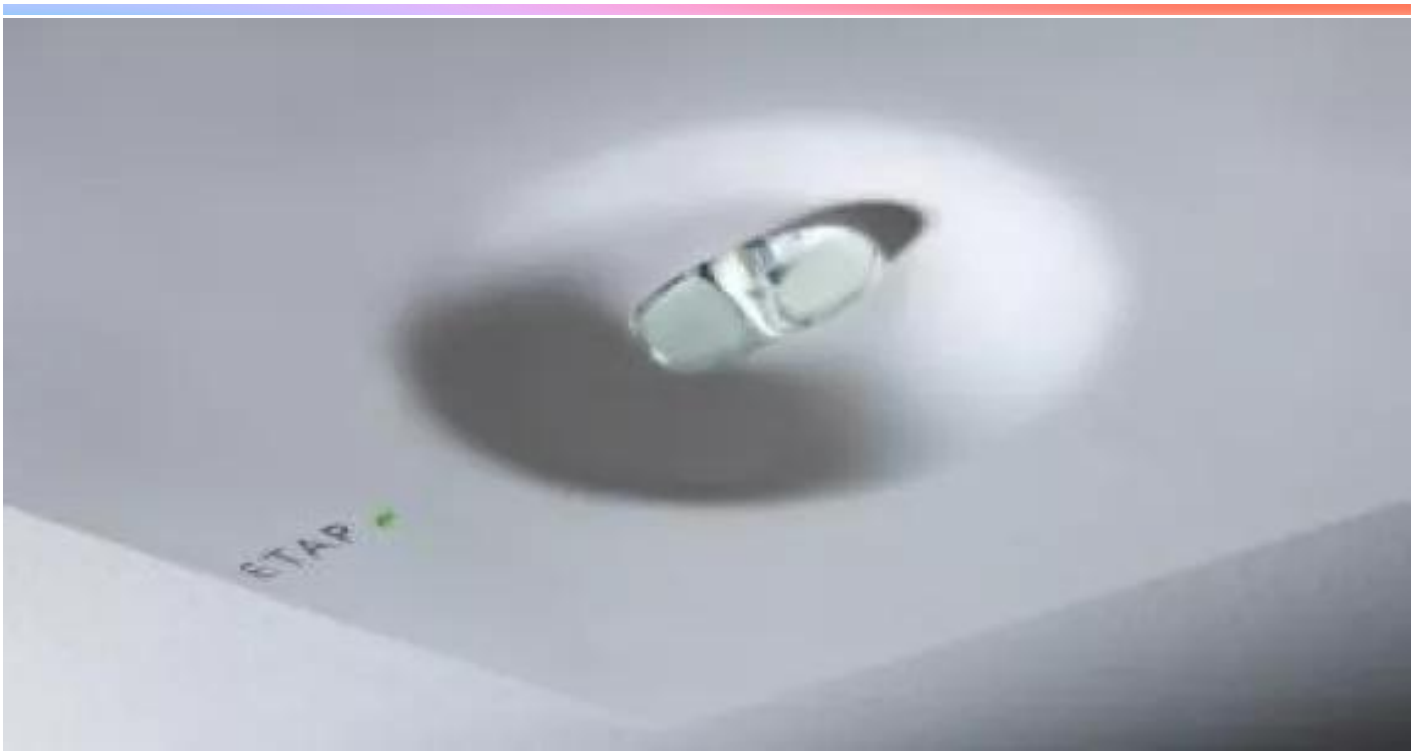


QRM projects pay off at ETAP

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ETAP, manufacturer and supplier of professional lighting solutions, managed to achieve great results in a short period of time by implementing QRM in various departments - i.e. production, as well as development and sales.

ETAP in Malle manufactures energy-efficient, flexible and comfortable lighting solutions for professional environments, from office buildings and hospitals to educational institutions and industrial workshops. This Antwerp-based company develops and manufactures fixtures and systems in-house, both for normal and emergency lighting.

ETAP recently started looking for new methods to serve its clients faster. The company found its new approach in Quick Response Manufacturing (QRM), a growth strategy that focuses on a radical reduction of lead times. In order to learn more about this approach, several employees followed the QRM Silver training.

QRM@ETAP

The company has been implementing QRM for about a year now and has started several projects, both in production and in the office environment.

For the application of QRM in production, ETAP started with the emergency lighting department in order to reduce the turnaround time from order to shipment. This was at the request of customers and would allow them to continue to compete with companies that supply from stock. Thanks to several interventions, the lead time was reduced from fifteen to five working days. The production of standard pictograms was also tackled. In this case, the turnaround time is already down to three working days.

This success encouraged ETAP to continue on the path it had started, resulting in even more positive results: deliveries within one week to Australia and New Zealand, a € 150 K reduction in the stock of finished products, and the rotation in the finished products warehouse was reduced from 34 days to four days. We are now planning to reduce the stock of semi-finished products by recalculating the batch size and extending the lead time reduction to other processes.

Another important project that was addressed via the QRM method was the LAAS (light-as-a-service) quotation process for the Belgian market. The company needed at least five weeks to prepare a customised quotation for the rental of light, while customer expectation was 2 to 3 weeks. Thanks to an analysis of the quotation process, the turnaround time of the lighting studies could be shortened. To this end, additional capacity was created by means of process optimisation and cross-training of the sales support staff.

A final project concerned the redesign of a product. This task was brought to a successful conclusion by forming a 'Quick Response Office Cell' (Q-ROC). This involved bringing a team of employees together at one location in order to work together intensively. COVID-19 threw a bit of a spanner in the works here, as working together within one cell was difficult to combine with working from home. Nevertheless, the benefits of this were evident and the fruits of good cooperation were reaped. As a result of the collaboration within the Q-ROC, a much stronger concept was created and the development time was shortened by two months.

Impact and lessons learned

ETAP managed to build up a lot of experience and learn lessons from the many projects. QRM is primarily about 'time thinking' and the use of common sense. The biggest obstacle often turns out to be the dominance of classical 'cost thinking'.

ETAP now has a full-time QRM Program Manager and wants to extend the principles of QRM to other levels within the company. The teams that already apply the strategy are examples for the others within the company. Towards the market, the implementation of the QRM strategy proved to be an important push to remain competitive, which is a considerable challenge due to the great diversity within the ETAP range of products.

(Source picture: Etap)

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