



Shorter lead times for manufacturers

09 September 2025, 11:22

Pascal Pollet

How Renson used QRM to streamline its customised production

Manufacturers working with a high level of product variation often come up against the same obstacles: unpredictable lead times, frustration on the shop floor and processes that are hard to plan. At Renson Outdoor, the business unit at Renson specialising in high-quality, **fully customised aluminium patio covers**, also faced challenges. The solution wasn't more planning or control, but a different way of thinking: **quick response manufacturing (QRM)**. A high level of internal engagement, supported by training and guidance from Sirris, allowed QRM to bring calm and efficiency to the process. As for the lead time, it fell from 3 to 6 days to 1.26 days.



From growth strategy to production challenge in customisation

Renson Outdoor is part of the wider Renson Group, whose specialist areas include ventilation, sun protection and façade cladding. It deliberately avoids making standard products. 'This strategic choice ensures a high degree of configurability,' explains Cyrano De Bock, MES expert at Renson. 'But it also means a lot of variation, not much repetition and a production environment where traditional planning methods come under pressure.'

The machining department, where aluminium profiles are milled, sawn and processed, was struggling to handle this complexity. 'We were facing **long and unpredictable lead times, a lot of “firefighting” by team leads and a high workload**. Orders had difficulty getting through the system, which disrupted the entire flow. Managing the process was a real challenge, and there was no overview.'



There was another factor at work, too: Renson operates in a highly seasonal market. When the sun comes out, demand rises sharply; in the winter, it drops again. These erratic peaks were hard to handle with a traditional approach.



Why LEAN didn't work

Initially, an attempt was made to improve things at the department using a **LEAN approach**. Cyrano: 'We started an improvement project, but it didn't feel right to me. There was too much emphasis on machine efficiency, and the bigger picture the total lead time and collaboration on the shop floor was being overlooked. It simply didn't reflect what we needed.'

That frustration led to action. Cyrano started looking for alternatives himself and stumbled upon QRM. 'I remembered the name from before, started reading the book *It's About Time*, and suddenly everything fell into place. QRM focuses on exactly what we needed: **lead time reduction in a context of variation and customisation**. I pitched it to my team lead with the words: "I don't know everything yet, but this feels right." I was given the go-ahead to explore it further.'

QRM Silver training as the starting point for shorter lead times

Cyrano enrolled on the **Sirris QRM Silver training programme** and found both confirmation and specific guidance. 'The training was to the point, practical and clear. Complicated material was explained in simple wording, and I was given exactly the tools I needed.'

One thing he especially appreciated was the human approach. 'When you want to change something on the shop floor, you often meet with resistance. But the training programme gave me a strong theoretical foundation. Now I was in a better position to explain why we wanted to approach things differently, which made it easier to get people on board.'

Moreover, the training covered numerous familiar situations. Cyrano cites the **in-house training course that was organised for team leads and operators** and given by Sirris. 'For example, they used LEGO bricks to illustrate the principle of WIP control. And it worked. You could literally see eyes widening around the table. People began to understand what we wanted to achieve. That was a turning point for me.'

More efficient production using QRM: a step-by-step approach at Renson

After the training programme, QRM was gradually introduced in one segment of the machining department: first with the low-runner profiles, and later in the high-runner zone. 'We wanted to proceed step by step. If you change everything at once, you'll get stuck, so we deliberately opted for a phased approach.'

Three specific QRM measures that Renson implemented on the shop floor

1. Working visually with ConWIP

One of the first visible changes was the introduction of a **work in progress (WIP) control mechanism** using cards. 'We set up a board with a small number of magnetic cards. Each

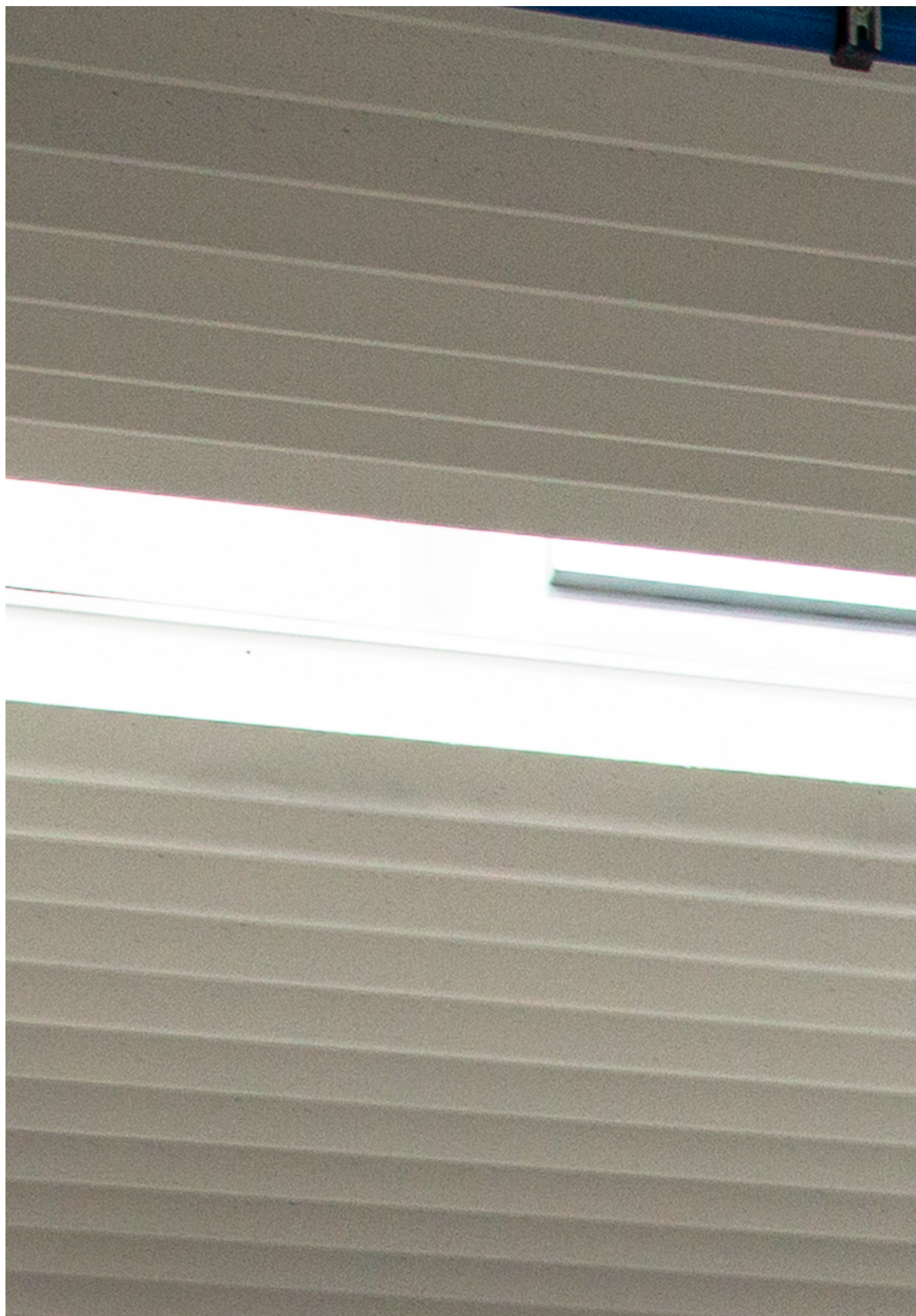
order got a card. If the board was empty, we didn't start any new orders. The focus shifted from "everything at once" to "finishing one thing properly". And that immediately made things a lot calmer.'

2. Planning wheel instead of detailed planning

Instead of trying to predict everything meticulously, a **planning routine** was used. 'We introduced a rhythm rather than trying to calculate everything in detail. In an environment with lots of variation, that's a much more robust way of working.'

3. Parallel flow between zones

Previously, orders followed a linear path from department to department. Now, different steps can be **started in parallel** because there's a better overview of what's happening. 'This dramatically reduced the waiting time between operations. We regained control of the flow.'



What benefits did QRM bring for teams, lead times and planning?

The effects were immediate. **The biggest gain was a lead time that fell from an average of between 3 and 6 days to 1.26 days in the best month so far.**

What's more, Cyrano has noticed that the system means that there are fewer outliers in lead time. 'The peaks are gone. The work has a more even spread, which makes the production plan more realistic. We used to face a lot of exceptions and firefighting. Now we can look ahead with confidence.'

Flexibility has increased too. 'We can cope better if team members are ill or there are unexpected absences. The work isn't confined to roles so rigidly: people work more as a team.' This increased resilience is essential, especially in a context of seasonal peaks or unpredictable staffing levels. 'We can handle fluctuations and unexpected situations better now, and that makes us a more robust team.'

The bottlenecks on the shop floor have been dealt with. 'We used to contend with clear bottlenecks that constantly blocked the flow. Now we're able to avoid these by a more efficient division of work.'

Not a quick fix, but a lasting one

Cyrano is the first to admit that QRM isn't a magic cure. 'It's not a quick fix. It takes time, training and, above all, a different mindset for everyone in the company. Take HR, for example. They work with job codes, so moving to a system where people can be deployed more widely isn't easy. By engaging in discussion and demonstrating why this works, we were able to move things forward, though.'

He advises other companies to start with training and have **someone to take the lead internally**. 'One QRM champion per department already makes a world of difference.'

So what's the ambition at Renson? 'We want to roll this out to other departments. Not hastily, but carefully. The foundations are in place.'

Do you also want to reduce lead times in your manufacturing company?

The QRM Silver training course from Sirris gives you practical tools to **shorten lead times and make your production organisation more resilient**. A new training series starts in November.

[Find out about the course and register](#)

Authors



Pascal Pollet