

## South African Ford workers visit India for training

Ford Motor Company South Africa (FMCSA) took over 200 of its assembly line workers, most of whom have never left the country before, to India for training in the art of lean manufacturing. The objective of the training was to improve processes, quality and speed of production in its South Africa plants, ahead of the introduction of the new Ranger later this year and the training is already yielding results.

This visit completed a year-long training programme aimed at teaching its factory workers 'Kaizen', the lean manufacturing processes that have been credited with increasing efficiency and reducing costs in large manufacturing operations across the world.

Instead of the approach coming from the top down, the company's management put theory into practice and sent the workers to the Indian coastal city of Chennai for an intensive two week training course in April 2011. The course was based on practice rather than theory and the groups had the opportunity to see, feel and touch the benefits that lean manufacturing delivered first hand.

The teachings are already yielding results, with those that have been on the training course motivating their teams to adopt a new, leaner and more efficient way of working. Every day starts a little earlier than it did in the past, with morning exercises that the trainees learned from their Indian colleagues. Regular team meetings are held every morning, with the majority of the Silverton assembly plant gathering for larger weekly meetings on Wednesday nights.

"The turnaround has been almost instantaneous," said Peter Lawson, VP of operations at FMCSA. "Not only has the quality and speed of our daily processes improved, but worker morale has improved exponentially, with various teams on the factory floors now competing against each other to see who can better their processes first."

Although the production of the new Ranger, which will be sold locally and exported to markets across the world, was the impetus for the training, the participants are adamant that it has brought about a mind-shift on the shop floor already.