

# Process Improvement

## Case Study – Identifying Product Outlets

A concrete and tile company's process for identifying retail and commercial product outlets was very inefficient and very inaccurate. The processes were evaluated and the following issues were noted:

- Outlets were manually looked up in a thick paper report.
- The paper reports were out of date and contained many locations that no longer carried the company's products.
- It took several minutes to identify outlets for the customer.
- Outlet addresses and phone number were often inaccurate or incomplete.
- The sound of paper shuffling in 2003 did not inspire customer confidence.

# Process Improvement

## Actions Taken

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- The master customer list was evaluated for sales over the past twelve months.
- Outlets with no sales during this period were filtered out of the list.
- Outlet address and phone information was reviewed and corrected.
- A spreadsheet-based tool was developed to quickly look up outlets.
- A procedure was set up to routinely review the outlet list for completeness and accuracy.

# Process Improvement

## Results

- The outlet search became paperless.
- Searching became a point and click operation.
- Generating a list was reduced to a few seconds.
- Multiple outlets were identified in a single search.
- Outlets could be pulled by zip code, postal code, county or state.
- Outlets were cross-referenced by type of outlet.
- An option to quickly email the list to the customer was added to the tool.
- Effort shifted to finding the optimal location instead of trying to find any location.
- Customer confidence was restored.
- Search time was reduced from several minutes to about three seconds.
- Providing inaccurate and outdated information was eliminated.
- Emailing lists eliminated paper from the process at both ends.

# Process Improvement

*What processes do you need automated?*

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