

CHAPTER 01

INTRODUCTION TO OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

Teaching Notes

Many students come to this course with negative feelings, perhaps because they have heard that the course includes a certain amount of quantitative material (which many feel uncomfortable with), or perhaps because the course strikes them as “how to run a factory.” Others seem to have very little idea about what operations management is. I view the initial meeting with my classes, and this first chapter, as opportunities to dispel some of these notions, and to generate enthusiasm for the course.

Highlights of the chapter include the following:

1. Operations as one of the three main functional concerns of most organizations.
2. The role and job of the operations manager as a planner and decision-maker.
3. Different ways of classifying (and understanding) production systems.
4. System design versus system operation.
5. Major characteristics of production systems.
6. Contemporary issues in operations management.
7. Operations as essentially managerial (planning, staffing, etc.)
8. The historical evolution of production/operations management.
9. Manufacturing operations versus service operations.
10. The need to manage the supply chain.

Reading: Why Manufacturing Matters

1. Given that the U.S. economy is becoming more service based, the percentage of employment in manufacturing is declining while the percentage of employment in the service industry is increasing. In addition, the loss of manufacturing jobs results in the loss of service jobs as well (a general estimate is that four service jobs are lost for each manufacturing job lost).
2. The government could offer companies tax incentives for purchasing new equipment or for hiring workers. In addition, the government could work with manufacturing companies to re-train workers in more advanced manufacturing processes.
3. Manufacturing innovation is important because it requires high value-added knowledge work that supports future innovation. Second, innovation generates high-paying jobs. Third, innovation is important because it improves productivity, thereby slowing the outsourcing of jobs to lower wage countries.

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Lei Huang



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