15 ASQ members participated in the Alcon Irvine Technology Center Tour following the formal closure of the 2012 WCQI Conference. The tour was organized by the ASQ Lean Enterprise Division.
Butch made a presentation on networking and benchmarking with partners like Toyota, CardinalHealth, Boeing, Nestle and others. The participants came from all different disciplines (manufacturing, supplier quality, quality, materials and senior staff). Advantages of benchmarking were discussed.

Butch then made a preview presentation on what we were going to see on our tour in implementing lean value stream methods. Case study on resolving customer backorders using lean tools was presented. Butch presented several examples of before and after processes during the presentation. Of interest was the Supplier Smart Carts (SSC) for assembly into the final product that was outsourced compared to their previous process of pulling and assembling individual components.

After the conference room presentations, we donned the static conductive (ESD) shoe gloves and lab coats and toured the assembly areas where we looked at examples of SSCs. The tour participants asked many questions. One question of interest was the traceability of the components in the SSCs.

From the assembly area, we toured the printed circuit board (PCB) area where we witnessed the pick and place process of components on the PCBs and the thermal bonding process.

We were also given a presentation by one of the trainers on how they train process auditors in the assembly area.

We walked in an in-process lean exercise and had a discussion with the team members. We also walked in on GEMBA team exercise where the team was brainstorming on how to reduce customer complaint process time.

After the tour, we returned to the conference room and removed our ESD protective wear. We were treated to cookies and a group picture before we returned to the awaiting limo to take us back to the hotel.

My overall impression of the Alcon facility was the open culture I witnessed. The team members from different disciplines working to solve problems, reduce waste using Lean tools was impressive. Their willingness to invite other industries and benchmark and share best practices was impressive. There are many lessons to be learnt from organizations like this.

Testimonial: By being able to witness a LSS project being implemented and having the opportunity to visit the different phases and being able to ask questions brings a very educational perspective for both sides. The observations and comments made by our diverse tour group provided a fresh look and feedback which can help the project owner to have third party view which in turn could be used for more improvement purposes on the project. I believe ASQ being a leader in the field of quality should have more of this kind of events.

Thank you ASQ Lean Enterprise Division for arranging the tour and the invite and Alcon for being such good, gracious hosts and sharing best practices.