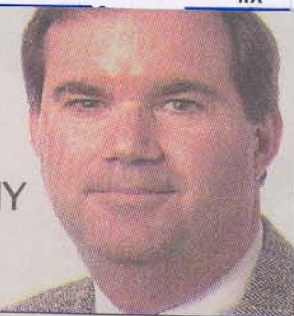


# The Day WORKDAY

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ANTHONY  
CRONIN



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## Group Helps Businesses Slim Down

**B**ONNIE DEL CONTE HAS A message to manufacturers: go lean.

Not the lean some of us strive for in our diets, but lean in terms of the manufacturing process — boosting efficiency, ratcheting up productivity, eliminating waste.

Del Conte is the new president of **CONNSTEP**, which is an organization devoted to helping the state's manufacturers, from small shops to large factories. The Rocky Hill-based organization can help manufacturers learn how to "go lean," manage environmental issues, and grow the business. Its overall aim is to improve the manufacturing process, which certainly can help the bottom line.

CONNSTEP is funded through state and federal monies and has been committed to manufacturers in the state since 1994.

If you work in manufacturing or own a manufacturing business, CONNSTEP is a resource that should be considered. It has a force of more than 20 field engineers ready to help — all with industrial experience and many who have managed or owned manufacturing firms.

Del Conte says her organization is working with many manufacturers currently to help them learn how to become a lean operation. It also offers assistance on environmental management, quality systems, human-resources issues and enterprise growth.

The lean process, she says, shows manufacturers how to establish an efficient continuous-flow operation, from the very beginning to final delivery to the customer. Lean principles include cutting waste throughout the manufacturing process, establishing greater efficiencies and getting workers on board to "think lean."

Del Conte says her agency can take manufacturers through an entire lean transformation. As part of that process, companies will learn human-resources techniques, environmental controls and operational changes that will improve their productivity and their competitive position.

"They do make a company more efficient and more productive, and everything flows to the bottom line," says Del Conte. She says a manufacturer was recently shown how to reduce the amount of scrap it was generating during its manufacturing process from nearly 8 percent to about 1 percent. That's a positive change to the manufacturer, both in costs and productivity, but Del Conte also points out it's an improvement to the environment, as well.

CONNSTEP, which is an acronym for Connecticut State Technology Extension Program, receives support from both the federal Department of Commerce and the state Department of Economic and Community Development. It's also connected to a nationwide network of similar manufacturing resources, so it can tap into a pretty deep pool of talent and resources to solve Connecticut manufacturers' needs or issues.

Del Conte says her organization can offer everything from seminars on a variety of manufacturing issues to complete lean-transformation programs.

"We're trying to get the message out that this is something that's good for your organization," says Del Conte. The agency also has revamped its Web site to make it more interactive for manufacturers, and there's plenty of helpful information for Web browsers.

"We really believe that manufacturing still plays an important job. What it brings to the state is still a huge piece (of the economy) and we don't want that to go away," she says.

For more information check out its Web site at [www.connstep.com](http://www.connstep.com) or call 800-266-6672.

*Anthony Cronin is The Day's business editor.*