

Reducing Rework in a High-Variety Metals Manufacturer

Sustain⁸

CHALLENGES

The client is a large, family-owned Italian manufacturer producing precision metal components for the high-fashion industry. Managing thousands of SKUs and frequent new-range launches, the business operates in a fast-moving, design-led environment with exceptionally high standards for both aesthetic finish and functional performance. Production spans machining, polishing, chemical and surface treatments, coatings, and final assembly—an inherently complex mix that made maintaining consistency challenging.

At the outset, right-first-time (RFT) performance averaged 92%. While typical for a high-mix operation, rework consumed significant time and capacity, complicating planning and placing pressure on already stretched teams. Management set a realistic target of 94% RFT, recognising the opportunity to improve without disrupting the speed, quality, and flexibility the business depended on.

OUR APPROACH

Rather than treating rework as a single issue, the 12-month programme focused on understanding where defects originated and how consistently processes were executed across the operation. A cross-functional team of seven worked across three pillars: improving data and diagnostics to strengthen root-cause visibility; tightening process standards and compliance to improve execution consistency; and addressing supply chain contributors to

Improving right-first-time performance in complex, fashion-led production

Client: Precision Metals Manufacturer

Industry: Precision metals for high fashion

RESULTS

● **97% RFT**
exceeding the original 94% goal

● **8 MONTHS**
Right-first-time (RFT) performance improved 8 months ahead of target

reduce incoming variation and specification gaps. Progress was deliberately paced, with changes tested, embedded, and stabilised to ensure improvements supported production without causing disruption.

THE RESULTS

- **Key changes:**
 - Defect causality and management: 5 initiatives (structured defect tracking, early root-cause identification, process ownership clarity, critical-step discipline, supply-variation visibility)
 - New operational standards: 3 initiatives (standardised procedures, accountability assignment, cross-functional review routines)
 - Collaboration & visibility: 3 initiatives (enhanced cross-team communication, shared performance dashboards, supply variation alerts)
- **RFT:** RFT improved ahead of target within 8 months
- **Rework:** Measurable reduction in rework



UNLOCKING SUSTAINABILITY

- Complexity doesn't prevent improvement: Even high-variation environments can deliver strong RFT gains with structured focus.
- Data enables better judgement: Sustainable quality improvement starts with visibility and root-cause clarity.
- Rework is a capacity issue: Reducing defects frees productive time—not just cost.
- Prioritise stability of changes: Embedding change carefully avoids disruption in fast-moving operations.