

While Automotive Manufacturers Become More Flexible, Western Companies Are Still Playing Catch-Up With Japan

Research and Markets (researchandmarkets.com/reports/c9259) has announced the addition of A Review of Flexible Automotive Manufacturing to their offering.

([PRWEB](#)) November 14, 2004 -- Auto makers are trying to be more flexible - using advances in production technology to adapt their production lines to build multiple models. But western companies are still playing catch-up with Japan.

Around 14 years ago, there was a re-evaluation of manufacturing processes, and slowly, European and American auto makers have adopted the Japanese methods and techniques epitomised by the Toyota Manufacturing System.

Not a moment too soon - by 1990, the Japanese auto makers were well established in North America and had already opened their first European production facilities.

Lean manufacturing techniques have now been implemented in many plants for almost ten years and should have now matured in terms of acceptance and delivering real benefits.

Yet the results are not conclusive. Both in Europe and North America, auto makers continue to be afflicted by overcapacity, and indigenous OEMs have been unable to reduce costs and increase profitability, especially in the face of stiff competition from the Japanese transplants.

Old, established plants, such as Fords Dagenham and GMs Luton plants in the UK for example - have fallen victim to this revolution - the plants were deemed too old and poorly designed to be modernised and made competitive.

In the main, western OEMs have had to introduce lean methods, with mixed results.

But lean manufacturing - cutting stock inventories, using Just-in-Time deliveries from suppliers and integrating Tier 1 suppliers into the product development process as well as just the production system - is only part of the story.

This Management briefing considers Flexible Manufacturing, providing a review of French and Japanese manufacturers as well as case studies for:

- General Motors
- Ford
- DaimlerChrysler

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For more information visit <http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/c9259>

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