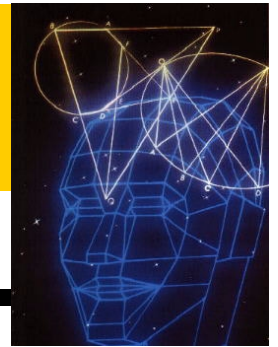


# Analysis & Prognosis

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## *Lateral thinking is crucial for developing and operating production systems*

by Nicolas P. Sokianos

Many companies have tried to copy the famous Toyota Production System (TPS). But it would usually prove difficult to implement in any other given company. Dealing with complex production systems is not only a matter of technique, but it has to take into consideration social, cultural and learning issues.

What is more important, complex production systems cannot be tackled in the way of simple machining problems. One has to deal with dozens of interrelating activities and programmes that influence each other.

A key issue is the personal and organisational development working hand in hand with corporate and technological development.

The human brain is rather limited in the handling of several interacting synopses simultaneously. For example, when facing 60 interrelating activities that can influence the performance of a production system,

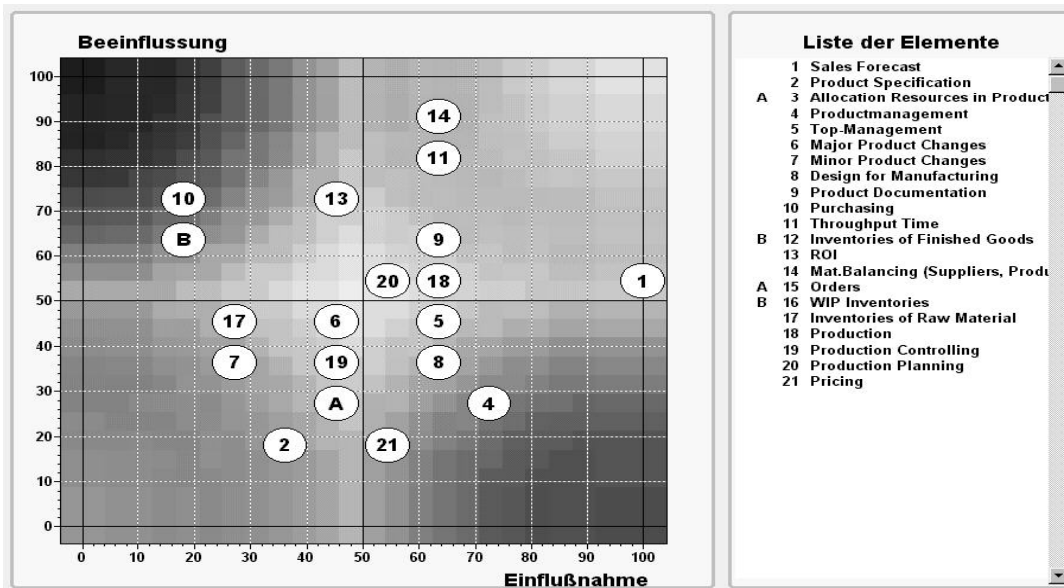
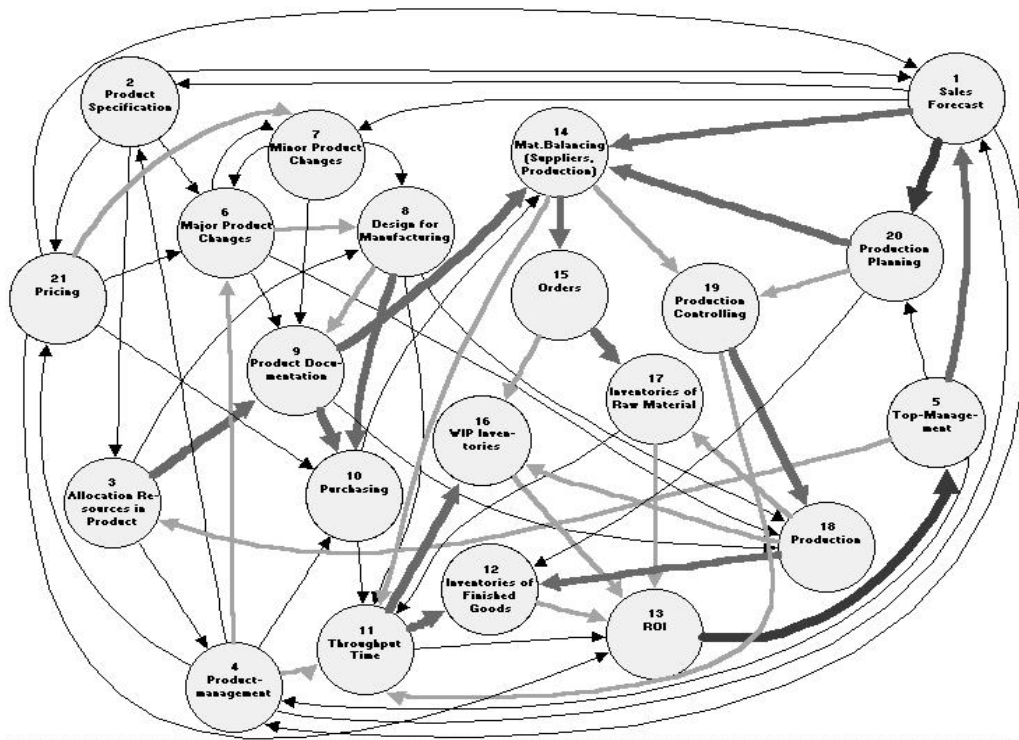
such as an automotive or an engineering company, it is all but impossible to find out the key drivers without the use of a computer system with appropriate software.

To make things worse, the interrelationship is liable to change from day to day. In the figure shown, we found that focussing on the quality of the forecasting system was crucial and had to be improved in order to improve the supply chain system as a whole.

When facing such a situation, one might better understand why Toyota spends so much money on improving the accuracy of their forecasting capabilities. However, it proves a rarity to find an understanding of this need when dealing with TPS. People are blinkered in believing that any improvement in their production system bears little relation to the quality of awareness towards customers from sales and marketing people.

thinking ahead

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