



**HONDA OF AMERICA  
MANUFACTURING, INC.:**  
*(ABSTRACT)*

**Lean Manufacturing and Environmental  
Management at Honda**

*For more than a decade, WRI's Sustainable Enterprise Program (SEP) has harnessed the power of business to create profitable solutions to environment and development challenges. BELL, a project of SEP, is focused on working with managers and academics to make companies more competitive by approaching social and environmental challenges as unmet market needs that provide business growth opportunities through entrepreneurship, innovation, and organizational change.*

*Permission to reprint this case is available at the BELL case store. Additional information on the Case Series, BELL, and WRI is available at: [www.BELLinnovation.org](http://www.BELLinnovation.org).*

Wendy Stockley, Environmental Manager for Honda's two Ohio-based automobile manufacturing plants, was about to be visited by Mr. Suzuki, the most senior environmental official from Honda headquarters in Japan. The company had recently taken a strong interest in certification under the new ISO 14000 environmental management standards. Suzuki had asked Stockley to evaluate the environmental practices of the Ohio plants in light of the ISO standards. In particular, he was interested in whether lean production practices, the cornerstone of Honda's high-quality manufacturing operations, were helping to achieve environmental performance or whether they were a hindrance.

Suzuki believed that ISO 14000 would increase in importance as a benchmark used by consumers, governments, and local communities for judging manufacturing plants. If he was correct in his view, understanding whether the Honda production system was complementary or antagonistic to meeting these standards would be critical to many of the company's decisions.

Although the manufacturing plants of other automobile companies in the United States had explicitly designed their environmental policies around federal and state regulations, Honda had tried to design policies that followed from, and were integrated with, its lean production philosophy. These policies were generally more flexible than traditional approaches and focused more on the end goal of efficiency than on meeting regulations. Stockley hoped to find the Honda approach better adapted to the ISO 14000