

# Title: *Where's my stuff?*

## Problem:

*A lab can only operate if the test materials are on hand. Consumable management was handled by support staff who could research items and suppliers and manage the documentation necessary to meet accreditation requirements and assure the right materials were available. Unfortunately, the technicians consumed the materials at an unpredictable rate and were unaware whether materials had been purchased but not received or might be stored somewhere else. Technicians either spent time searching for materials or simply placed a request to order more. Rush orders were common.*

## Analysis:

*Usage analysis showed that the rate was indeed unpredictable. Purchasing could not be prescheduled without holding far too much inventory.*

### 5 Whys:

**Why?** The consumables are not available

**Why?** The stock is not replenished when it is used up

**Why?** No one notifies the procurement team to order more

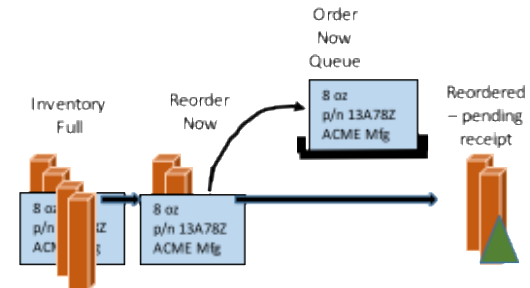
**Why?** It is not evident that more stock is needed

**Why?** There is no way to identify that the available stock is being used up

## Countermeasure:

*The team developed a set of visual indicators:*

- The last container opened received a red hat.*
- When the new container was on order, the red hat was replaced with a green hat.*
- Under the last container was a card identifying what it was so it could be reordered.*
- Items that had bulk storage or alternate storage locations also had that information on the shelf space.*
- A flag outside the storage area was raised when an order needed to be placed or material relocated from bulk storage.*



## Results:

*In 1 day:*

- Rush orders of material were completely eliminated.*
- Tests no longer waited for days while materials were purchased.*
- Techs no longer spent hours searching for and researching consumables.*