Point of the Article: There is an APICS concept around the idea that sometimes demand for a good is lumpy. You cannot predict it, it is not repetitive, and it just comes along. It may be an existing product, but the volume changes a lot over time, up and down, and it does not repeat in a manner that makes planning easy.

You might sell 100 hamburgers a day, but the day someone (a travelling circus perhaps) comes along and orders 500 may trash your planning. You might have the meat, but you might go out of stock on buns or pickles.

In push environments, if your lead-times are correct (and this is a huge "if"), the MRP calculation is typically correct, but any number of sub systems or components might be overwhelmed and cause the lead times to be incorrect for the *new, short term* volume.

Pull systems will have the same problem. The little gravity feed heat-chute holds ten burgers, which is fine until you order 50. Then it is "step out of the line buddy" and wait.

At the end of the day, no matter how much executive yelling occurs, no system handles major change well. It does not matter if it is a push system, a pull system, or you colorectal system after a 12 burritos for $10 taco bell box special, it will be smelly. If you want to improve, focus on improvement on things that have the least amount of variability first. Make them stable and repeatable.

Situations where coefficient of variation is high, for example greater than one, will tax both pull and push systems, and are really such that we should not even bother with pull systems. Demand is not repeatable, so do not get hung up on averages. It will not work. It is not repeatable, not predictable, no matter how much you demand it to be.

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One day the Queen of Tarts was quizzing me about the demand for fruitcakes. For some reason, he thought the demand was level. In his world, people ate fruitcakes all the time.

Maybe there was some slight up or down demand to be offset by safety stock, based on average annual demand, but certainly not a spike at year end around Christmas, certainly nothing APICS might refer to as "lumpy" demand or "seasonal" demand.

The Queen's "average" annual demand logic went along something like the following: Consumer A bought 24 fruitcakes a year, therefore their average demand was 2 fruitcakes a month, and so we should build 2 fruitcakes a month into the schedule.

This completely ignored the fact that Consumer A bought 23 fruitcakes in December, and one in August when crazy Uncle Bart thought Christmas should be really celebrated, but fuck, who cares, the Queen wanted an audience for his knowledge spew, not input. Most people just nodded along and did the sheep thing.

So one day I was whining (and it might have been a whine) about "lumpy" and "year-end" demand, and the Queen just lost it totally. He started ranting about "there is no yearend demand" and "lumpy demand" did not exist, and he NEVER WANTED TO HEAR THOSE PHRASES AGAIN.

And I had yet another thing to the list of things about me that pissed off the Queen of Tarts.

It was getting to be a long list, maybe even novel length. I suspected it might get Russian novel length before too long. Sort of like the novels "Things that PISS ME OFF ABOUT YOU about Anna Karenina" or "War and Peace and THINGS THAT PISS ME OFF ABOUT YOU".

He was in a scary mad "no one can stop me" psycho mode, so everyone got quite. Lumpy Demand did not exist. The Queen was right. APICS was wrong. We would never use that phrase again.[1]

Naturally, we immediately started an e-mail string looking for a replacement term. Below are some of the candidates.

Candidates:

1. "Less than Level" Demand
2. "Non- Prairie like" Demand
3. "Variable Gyrating" Demand
4. "Fucked up the Ass and I did not even get a free drink" demand
5. "Non normalized" Demand
6. "Swiss" Demand (this one is for Fritz)
7. "The Cow went up the Mountain" Demand (again, for Fritz)
8. "Disturbed" Demand
9. "Holy sh*t, look at that Demand" Demand
10. "Damn, that's Demand" Demand
11. "damn my ass hurts" demand
12. "Lederhosen to tight Eyes Bulging" Demand (once again…Fritz)
13. "What you don't like orders?" Demand
14. "Looks like a Federal Deficit Chart" Demand
15. "What's for Lunch" Demand
16. "Someone grab a kanban calculator" Demand
17. incompetent planning demand
18. "Ebb and Flow" Demand
19. "Roller Coaster" Demand
20. "Ride 'em Cowboy" Demand
21. "Peaks and Valleys" Demand

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[1] Damn you APICS, damn you and your efforts to standardize terminology and create a lexicon to promote communication and understanding around planning. Damn you to dirty dog hell.

22. Not creamy demand
23. Faith Based Planning
24. Spastic Colon Demand

Eventually, we settled on "non-Creamy" demand and started using that term amongst ourselves. This was fun and led to a lot of jocularity.

We had a good time and laughed amongst ourselves, flipping off the Queens visage when the computer booted up and showed his yellow teeth encrusted jowls on our screens firs thing in the morning, and just having a great time until the next BFD meeting (Butt Fucking Deployment – a lean technique for cascading ass rapes through a maximum security prison or corporate population).

Demand was not LUMPY, it was NON CREAMY!

It was great until one day the Queen, while lubing himself up for the next pointed questioning of his staff, rising to his full 2 inches, asked what the problem with FRUITCAKE DELIVERY was, since his bug eating lean kanban calculating team of Renfields[2] had said customers wanted on average 2 fruitcakes per customer each month, and we were now 16 cakes a customer behind, here on December 2! What the F![3]

So I said demand was "non Creamy", and added yet another thing to the list of things the pissed the Queen off about me.

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[2] This is actually a literary reference so if you look it up you might learn something. I would even suggest reading the original since my wife made me and the kids read it, and therefore you should have to read it too or forever be my lesser. And not just my literary lesser but also because my wife is hot, so there is a good chance you are lesser than me in the hot wife department too. I am tapping gold.

[3] I am using F to connote the Word FUCK, which is a rude word. I may start using F*ing to connote FUCKING, and MFW to mean MOTHE FUCKING WHORES, in order to avoid using bad fucking words.