Polaris MEP

Polaris MEP is a statewide non-profit organization that provides competitive manufacturing business improvement programs to grow RI’s manufacturing industry. Polaris MEP is an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology’s Manufacturing Extension Program (NIST MEP) and a business unit of the University of Rhode Island Research Foundation.

Polaris MEP provides one-on-one consulting, public workshops and in-house training ranging from process improvement and workforce development to business practices, supply chain integration, innovation, and technology transfer.

Polaris project managers, offering years of experience across several industries, guide manufacturers to sustainable growth, innovative technology strategies and cost efficient operations. Polaris local industry experience, national connections and global market access, make the difference in helping companies to realize their goals.

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ECONOMIC IMPACT

MEP Center impacts are based on clients surveyed in FY2016

$27.6 Million
Total Increased/Retained Sales

138
Total Increased/Retained Jobs

$4.5 Million
New Client Investments

$551K
Cost Savings
"The Lean effort is going well. Our Polaris MEP project manager, who is now involved in our Lean Steering Committee, has been a great help." Adam Larocque, Design Engineer

TRAINING ELIMINATES WASTE, BOOSTS BUSINESS RESULTS

ABOUT. Founded in 1954, Fiberglass Fabricators, Inc. (FFI) has served the water and wastewater industries with thousands of product installations in a wide array of applications. With 20 employees specializing in weirs, baffles, troughs, launder, and tank covers, as well as custom products, FFI has the experience and know-how to tackle a broad range of composites projects. As fiberglass is required more often in corrosive environments across multiple industries, the Smithfield, Rhode Island-based company continuously seeks to be the first choice of end users, contractors and engineers.

THE CHALLENGE. FFI recognized a need to cut waste from its processes. The composites industry was becoming increasingly competitive, and companies in the southern United States had drastically lower overhead. The company had begun a Lean initiative in the 1990s but the effort subsided due to a lack of standardization and some personnel changes. FFI reached out to Polaris MEP, a NIST MEP affiliate, assured by the center’s reputation for results and project manager’s expertise.

MEP’S ROLE. Polaris MEP conducted Lean 101 trainings for FFI, introducing company leadership to specific continuous improvement tools and methods. FFI leaders selected particular staff members to form a continuous improvement management team, and Polaris MEP helped to increase their readiness for production leadership through the training and implementation of Lean Manufacturing tools and concepts. The training covered Visual Workplace Organization, Value Stream Mapping and One Piece Flow Production.

Polaris MEP helped FFI to develop project plans for high-value production areas and projects, with measurable impacts and outcomes. The management team easily communicated the outcomes to stakeholders throughout the organization. The improvements led to investments in new equipment and other areas of the business, and FFI created new positions and retained jobs.

RESULTS

- Added/retained 16 jobs
- $300,000 investment in new equipment
- $100,000 investment in other areas of business