Alabama Technology Network

The Alabama Technology Network (ATN) is a part of the Alabama Community College System and serves as the Manufacturing Extension Partnership affiliate for Alabama. ATN has served Alabama manufacturers since 1996. ATN’s team of experts helps address the needs of industry and business through innovative, sustainable, and cost-effective solutions. ATN conducts detailed needs assessments, outlines potential solutions based on the assessment results, and provides technical assistance and customized training to help companies solve their problems. ATN links industry and business with its network of research universities, community colleges, government agencies, and other partner organizations to deliver the technical assistance, customized training, and other tools and resources needed to improve operational efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness for Alabama manufacturers. ATN offices are located strategically throughout the state at 16 community colleges and 3 research universities to provide local points of contact and access to resources. ATN’s vision is to be the driving force that makes Alabama’s manufacturers the most profitable, competitive, and productive in the world.

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ECONOMIC IMPACT

MEP Center impacts are based on clients surveyed in FY2016

$123.5 Million
Total Increased/Retained Sales

2,076
Total Increased/Retained Jobs

$73.2 Million
New Client Investments

$20.2 Million
Cost Savings
"The services of the [ATN] allowed us to create jobs, streamline what we've already got going, and make money as a business." 
Lee Conn, President

STUDENT INTERNS GENERATE NEEDED ASSISTANCE FOR STARTUP

ABOUT. Located in Birmingham, Alabama, Motus Motorcycles is a very small startup with 13 employees. The company is committed to building the next generation of American motorcycles for die-hard riding enthusiasts. In addition, the Motus mighty V4 Baby Block® engine has been generating demand on its own. The company has received inquiries from companies and individuals wanting to use the engine for all kinds of applications, from powering sawmill equipment to powering airplanes. Motus considers itself to be two companies—a motorcycle company and a powertrain company.

THE CHALLENGE. Motus management and stakeholders determined that the company needed expert assistance in executing its new production line, along with reconfiguring available warehouse and production space to accommodate increased capacity. They contacted the Alabama Technology Network (ATN), a NIST MEP affiliate, for assistance.

MEP'S ROLE. Working with the Alabama Productivity Center (APC) at the University of Alabama (UA), ATN provided three student interns from UA's Operations Management and Aerospace Engineering departments to assist Motus with process improvements to support production ramp-up. The company aimed at producing between 250 and 300 bikes, which is one motorcycle each working day needed to supply a network of 19 dealers across the nation. In addition, with the engine as the core of everything the company does, Motus planned to move production of the engine from a Texas facility to its Birmingham base to streamline the motorcycle assembly process.

Supported by center professional staff, the student interns facilitated the successful transfer of engine production operations. They reconfigured available space to increase storage and assembly capacity, avoid damage of parts, and reduce searching time to acquire necessary parts. The students also helped to improve the engine wiring harness design and assisted Motus in creating and incorporating critical standards for operations. "Those were the kind of things that lightened our load when we were really focusing on other parts of getting the business up off the ground," explained Motus President Lee Conn, noting that the interns were very "knowledgeable, energetic, and skillful."

RESULTS

- Increased sales of $500,000
- Cost savings of $125,000
- $600,000 new investments
- Added/retained 6 jobs