

"If our customers' machines are experiencing downtime, they are losing money. Igus maintains a very large inventory and lean assembly process specifically to respond to customers in need of rapid delivery to keep their machines running." Richard Abbate, Vice President

MAKING WORKFLOW SMARTER, PROFITABLE

ABOUT. Igus Bearings, Inc., is a global company with headquarters in Germany and a newly designed, 162,000-square-foot factory and office-space facility in East Providence, RI. It has served the North American market for almost 30 years. The company makes polymer bearings and chains, which are plastic products that enable movement in machines, developing the technology to support its innovative products. It sells across many trades, including agriculture, construction and the automotive industry.

THE CHALLENGE. The economic downturn of 2008 changed business operations for Igus. The company was efficiently fulfilling large orders on a regular basis, but the dynamic change resulted in smaller orders to the Igus factory. Igus realized that they needed to improve their factory efficiency to survive in the changing environment. The ability to handle any order of any size was key to survive against the larger (but slower) competition.

MEP'S ROLE. A key to Igus' success has been its adoption of lean practices. All Igus employees take part in a Lean 101 training session that the owner also participates in. His presence is a sign of how much value is assigned to the training. Polaris MEP, a NIST MEP affiliate, helped introduce the lean processes which are a way of simplifying and improving the consistent flow of an order from the customer all the way through packaging and shipping. The company integrates lean skills and practices into everything from ordering and stocking procedures to the manufacturing floor, and back into research and development. Polaris MEP Project Managers were embedded in the Igus transformation by introducing lean practices for streamlining all paperwork associated with orders, workspace standardization and daily quality checklists. The company has since eliminated phone calls to the manufacturing floor by using a system of instant messages via computers. All messages, instructions and installation notes are kept together and intact as they travel down the assembly line. This results in fewer errors. The Polaris MEP team was instrumental in helping Igus transform their operations from a small, disorganized warehouse to the lean machine Igus is today.



RESULTS



Reduced customer complaints by **50%**



Transformed business to efficiently process small orders



96% of orders now ship within 24 hours

NEXT STEPS



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