



GEORGIA MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP (GAMEP)

The Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (GaMEP) is a program of Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute and is a member of the National MEP network supported by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). The GaMEP has been serving Georgia manufacturers since 1960. The Center offers a solution based approach through coaching and education designed to increase top line growth and reduce bottom line cost. GAMEP has ten regions across the state of Georgia. Each region has a dedicated regional manager that specializes in project management and implementation, as well as resources to serve the manufacturing industry. They are ready to meet with you, at your convenience, to understand your needs, and recommend a customized solution that best fits your goals and objectives.

The GaMEP has established partnerships within the economic development, government, industry, and private sectors that have complementary missions. These relationships help ensure that all applicable state and private support services are easily accessed to help improve and grow your organization.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

MEP Center impacts are based on clients surveyed in FY2024



\$366.3 Million

Total Increased/Retained Sales



1,109

Total Increased/Retained Jobs



\$80.6 Million

New Client Investments



\$25.8 Million

Cost Savings

CONTACT US



Georgia Tech
75 5th Street, NW Suite 3010
Atlanta, GA 30308-0640



(404) 894-4633



gamep.org



tim.israel@innovate.gatech.edu



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CASCADE CORPORATION SUCCESS STORY: EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURING COMPANY TAKES A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ACHIEVING SHORT AND LONG-TERM GOALS

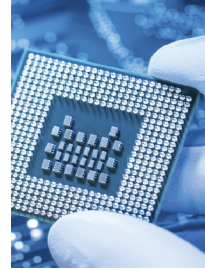
ABOUT CASCADE CORPORATION. Cascade Corporation manufactures material handling equipment for many different industries including warehousing and logistics, food and beverage manufacturing, agriculture, construction, and many others. The company started as a small machine shop in Portland, Oregon, and has grown to become a global leader of attachments, forks, masts, and related technologies for forklifts and AGVs.

THE CHALLENGE. In 2023, when Vance Merritt joined Cascade Corporation as plant manager for the 87-person manufacturing facility in Warner Robins, Georgia, the company was doing well. During the pandemic, demand for material handling equipment skyrocketed and the plant met demand by increasing workforce numbers and running regular overtime shifts. While this solution worked in the short-term, the company had a long-term goal of expanding operations at the Warner Robins plant by 20 percent over the next 3-5 years.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Merritt engaged the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (GaMEP) at Georgia Tech, part of the MEP National Network™ to take the improvement efforts to the next level, by digging deeper into their lean efforts while also bringing in project managers with other types of expertise to look at different aspects of their business. One of the first areas Merritt wanted to explore was how the company could use technology to improve efficiency, while also considering employee experience. Some parts of the company's production process were necessary but could be repetitive or tedious for workers. Finding and keeping employees to do this work had been difficult, especially in a competitive labor market. GaMEP Technology Project Manager Tom Sammon evaluated ten equipment areas to identify opportunities for modernization, automation, or upgrade. He then built a technology roadmap that gave the company a step-by-step approach to strategically incorporate new technology throughout the facility and prepare for future growth. One of the first projects on the roadmap was implementing the use of collaborative robots or "cobots" to complete high drudgery processes throughout the plant, freeing up employees to complete more value-added tasks. Sammon scoped out processes that could effectively be performed by cobots and helped the company create an RFP for their specific needs. Over the course of the next several months, the company worked with GaMEP on a series of operational excellence projects as well.

"We appreciate the excellent service and support we get from the GaMEP. They are readily available and willing to help in any way possible. They have experts with real manufacturing experience that come in, recommend solutions, and then actively participate in the implementation. The improvements we have achieved across many different parts of the company will help us stay competitive in the future."

-Vance Merritt, Plant Manager



RESULTS



12 jobs created to support growth



Evaluated **10** strategic opportunities for utilizing new technology and developed a roadmap



Increased uptime by **10%** in the saw department through the Managing for Daily Improvement system



Identified **3** opportunities to use cobots to complete repetitive or arduous jobs



Identified an additional project to redesign the layout of one of the product lines



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