MAINE MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP (MAINE MEP)

The Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP) is able to leverage a vast array of public and private resources and services that are available to every manufacturing enterprise in Maine. The nationwide system of MEP centers is linked through the U.S. Department of Commerce - National Institute of Standards and Technology’s Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NIST MEP), with the common goal to strengthen the global competitiveness of U.S. manufacturers.

The challenge for manufacturers today is satisfying escalating customer expectations in an increasingly volatile and competitive global market while also maintaining satisfactory profit margins. With technological change happening so rapidly many small and medium manufacturing enterprises (SMEs) find it difficult to keep pace with those demands. Maine MEP provides affordable, innovative solutions to the problems Maine MEP will assist your organization in a transformation from traditional to world-class manufacturer. The MEP Center’s experienced project managers will work with companies to identify conditions that may impede a company’s ability to become more efficient, competitive and prosperous. Maine MEP can assist in providing the resources to help maximize profit. In working side by side leadership, the MEP becomes a partner for success.

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ECONOMIC IMPACT

MEP Center impacts are based on clients surveyed in FY2018

- **$75.9 Million** Total Increased/Retained Sales
- **526** Total Increased/Retained Jobs
- **$14.7 Million** New Client Investments
- **$6.5 Million** Cost Savings

The MEP National Network™ is a unique public-private partnership that delivers comprehensive, proven solutions to U.S. manufacturers, fueling growth and advancing U.S. manufacturing.
NEW QMS IMPROVES BUSINESS SYSTEMS & EXPANDS SALES OPPORTUNITIES

ABOUT THERMOFORMED PLASTICS OF NEW ENGLAND.
Thermoformed Plastics of New England (TPNE) produces high-quality parts for the thermoforming plastics industry using both thin and heavy gauge molding equipment. Based in Biddeford, Maine, with around 12 employees, TPNE is dedicated to meeting the needs of its high-volume customers, as well as those looking for more short-run manufacturing.

THE CHALLENGE. TPNE had spent eight years attempting to implement an ISO 9001-based Quality Management System (QMS) with limited success. With the new release of ISO 9001, company leaders decided to reach out to the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP), part of the MEP National Network. Maine MEP agreed to help the company understand the new guidelines, simplify its QMS documentation, and train a group of TPNE employees as QMS internal auditors.

MEP CENTER’S ROLE. Maine MEP worked closely with key employees to update the TPNE quality system documentation to the ISO 9001:2015 standard. This included a substantial effort to re-structure the QMS using comprehensive, yet easy-to-read process flow charts. Maine MEP took an organized, constructive approach that “forced us to take a second look—with a much more critical eye—at some of our own long-standing internal procedures, which in turn, led to numerous process improvements,” explained Paul Tyson, TPNE general manager.

Eight TPNE employees completed the QMS Internal Auditor training provided by Maine MEP, and a Make It In America grant helped offset some of the training costs. The company reduced the amount of unnecessary and burdensome documentation and engaged in an intensive six-month effort to produce a set of documents that significantly consolidated the previous version of QMS procedures. The newly trained internal auditors then conducted a rigorous review of the written procedures against the actual business operation to verify the system’s readiness for a certification audit.

“It’s not enough to simply have a QMS in place, you also need to understand, embrace and practice it each and every day,” observed Tyson. The investment in training and implementation paid off, and TPNE passed the stage 1 and 2 audits conducted by an outside auditor to successfully obtain ISO 9001:2015 certification. The certificate serves to support relationships with major customers, and allows for growth into markets that request the standard as a requirement for entry. The internal auditors continue to evaluate the QMS and implement refinements that support continuous improvements to the quality program.

“We enthusiastically endorse MEP’s ability to assist businesses with understanding the ISO standards and complying with its guidelines. We couldn’t have done it without them!”

-Paul Tyson, General Manager