NEW YORK MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP (NY MEP)

Empire State Development’s Division of Science, Technology and Innovation’s (NYSTAR) mission is to advance technology innovation and commercialization in New York State. Through regional New York MEP centers, NYSTAR works to provide direct technology assistance to small and medium size manufacturers and other businesses. A key strength of New York MEP is its affiliation with the U.S. Department of Commerce’s nationwide MEP network, allowing it to draw upon the expertise within over 400 local outreach centers across the country. As a network of 11 independent, not-for-profit organizations, New York MEP centers cultivate the growth of high-tech industry and help smaller manufacturers modernize. The organizations share a common commitment to providing direct, strategic assistance to companies in the areas of entrepreneurship, technology commercialization, product development, high-tech business incubator management and technology transfer services.

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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 YORK SUCCESS STORY

LEAN TRAINING LEADS TO $1.2 MILLION IN IMPACTS

ABOUT UNILUX ADVANCED MANUFACTURING. Unilux Advanced Manufacturing produces watertube and firetube boilers used by energy service companies and various facilities, including commercial and industrial buildings, high-rise residential towers, hospitals, military installations, and schools. Unilux’s “bread-and-butter” boiler is the Unilux “W” Series. Like all of the company’s boilers, it carries a 25-year warranty, though many last up to 40 years, making quality construction an imperative and corner cutting untenable. Based in Schenectady, New York, Unilux has around 40 employees.

THE CHALLENGE. Over the past few years, Unilux’s management team had seen competitors capture more of the W Series’ market share. Enhancing Unilux competitiveness was “a necessity,” said Mickey Lavicska, Unilux’s vice president of exterior relations. That prompted Unilux to partner with the Business Growth Solutions (BGS) unit of the Center for Economic Growth (CEG), part of the MEP National Network. BGS helped Unilux secure grants to offset the cost of growth and productivity training.

MEP CENTER’S ROLE. Unilux began its Lean journey with CEG’s Principles of Lean Manufacturing course. To ensure uninterrupted production, half the manufacturing team participated in the hands-on four-round simulation exercise. In the first round, the team could only deliver about 10 percent of an order with on-time delivery. The instructor promised the participants they’d be able to deliver the units with 95 percent on-time delivery by the end of the third round. Lavicska noted the team’s skepticism; however, he believed the instructor. Over the following two rounds, the instructor introduced various principles that enabled the Unilux team to achieve that goal. “That’s what turned on the light bulb for these guys,” said Lavicska.

Unilux continued the Lean work in the following months with a Value Stream Mapping (VSM) analysis of the company’s “W” Series, followed by related Kaizen improvement events based on the VSM data. The company embarked on projects to improve workflow, increase capacity, better utilize floor space and reduce overall lead times. Unilux’s Kaizen teams exceeded their targeted outcomes, reducing boiler delivery-time to between 6 and 10 weeks, down from 12 to 14 weeks. Those reduced labor hours translated into more competitive pricing and the recapturing of market share. CEG also hosted a Lean Finance & Accounting workshop for Unilux, explaining the potential financial statement impact of Lean manufacturing, especially as it relates to inventory reduction. Finally, Unilux benefitted from putting an inside sales professional through six months of Sandler Sales Mastery. “As a result, we are able to better pinpoint customer requirements,” explained Lavicska. The financial impacts are significant, and the company is gaining more of the market share and keeping jobs.

"I would recommend this class to anyone going through Lean for the first time."

-Brian Champagne, Controller

RESULTS

Increased/retained sales: $450,000
Increased/retained jobs: 39
Cost-savings: $440,000
Impact on new products: $280,000
Other financial impacts: $51,000