OREGON MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP (OMEP)

The Oregon Manufacturing Extension Partnership (OMEP) is a non-profit organization that aims to help Oregon manufacturers respond to the challenges of competing in an increasingly global economy. The Center helps companies grow by bringing advanced thinking and hands-on skills to guide companies towards business improvements that lead to immediate results. The goal is permanent, long-term profitability.

OMEP works with owners, executives, managers and operators to assess company needs in all areas. From assessment to implementation, OMEP ensures that a company’s efforts provide an immediate payback. Regardless of the starting point, the goal is to unleash a company’s growth potential. Every client requires a customized approach focusing on their specific obstacles to growth. Entry points range from creating improved flow on the production line, to speeding sales order processing, to training the workforce on problem solving approaches, to developing a strategy to enter new markets. Whatever the need, OMEP offers the tools, expertise, and the flexibility to engage with manufacturers at all levels.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

MEP Center impacts are based on clients surveyed in FY2017

- **$119.2 Million** Total Increased/Retained Sales
- **893** Total Increased/Retained Jobs
- **$41.5 Million** New Client Investments
- **$11.3 Million** Cost Savings

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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.
ABOUT RUFFWEAR. Located in Bend, Oregon, Ruffwear’s mission is to build dog gear to enhance and inspire exploration for outdoor adventurers and their human companions. Ruffwear continually strives to design and build gear for dogs that allows their customer’s four-legged friends to accompany them on shared adventures while providing a level of safety and comfort in the great outdoors. With close to 10 employees, Ruffwear has expanded its product line from dog bowls to include dog harnesses, booties, collars, lifejackets, and travel gear.

THE CHALLENGE. Ruffwear has been on a Continuous Improvement Journey for many years and is always striving to improve. The company contacted the Oregon Manufacturing Extension Partnership (OMEP), part of the MEP National Network™, with a specific goal in mind: reducing lead time with their Vietnam partner. At the time, the lead time was 60 days for the Front Range harness.

MEP CENTER’S ROLE. Through Lean Enterprise technical implementation, the Ruffwear leadership team worked with OMEP to reduce lead time, increase throughput, and reduce inventory. By identifying and implementing improvement opportunities, the team reduced lead time to 30 days on Ruffwear’s largest selling product.

To stabilize and improve operational effectiveness, the company invested in raw material inventory and established business processes and systems to sustain the Lean implementation for the long term. As part of the project, OMEP conducted owner and employee trainings on creating flow for their suppliers in Vietnam. Implementing a 30-day lead time in Vietnam was precedent setting, as few other outdoor goods companies have achieved this. With fewer stock outs, Ruffware gained new sales and lowered supply chain costs.

"OMEP’s systematic, step-by-step approach to problem-solving and Lean implementation has been a critical success factor in Ruffwear’s supply chain management."

-Will Blount, President