

A MADE-IN-AMERICA SUCCESS STORY

ABOUT JACQUART FABRIC PRODUCTS. Jacquart Fabric Products (JFP) manufactures a diverse line of fabric products for a variety of retail, government, and commercial applications. Founded in 1958, the family-owned business is located in Ironwood, Michigan, and is committed to producing all-American-made goods. JFP has around 140 team members and three production divisions, including the legendary Stormy Kromer, a clothing and accessories brand. Other divisions include Pet Products, and Contract and Custom Upholstery: Tarps, Covers & Awnings. A retail division oversees the flagship store and walk-in customer needs.

THE CHALLENGE. After five decades in business, JFP was a successful sewing factory by every measure. However, CEO Bob Jacquart knew that while the future looked bright, the company needed to answer crucial questions relating to business growth and product line diversity to continue that success. In addition, Jacquart wanted a succession plan in place to successfully and seamlessly transition ownership to the next generation. He reached out to the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center (MMTC), a NIST MEP affiliate, for assistance.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. MMTC partnered with the community development financial institution Northern Initiatives to provide a business loan to JFP for expert training in the area of strategic business planning. The training emphasized long- and short-range goal setting for operations, personnel, and manufacturing. MMTC helped JFP to identify deficits in these areas and adopt a plan for improvement.

For example, the company made a decision to drive more resources to one division that showed promise, even though it was just 25 percent of the stronger divisions at the time. JFP committed to a continuous improvement process that produced long-term positive impacts on both the top and bottom lines. Now, the business can support three full-time division managers and a production manager to oversee expanding product lines. Although JFP is still in the early days of its long-term strategic plan, the division it decided to focus on has more than doubled sales this year alone.

For the first time since the company was founded, Jacquart feels comfortable about its future direction. Armed with answers to the big strategic questions, the day-to-day concerns are easier to handle. By leveraging its iconic, respected brands, Made-in-America values, and production expertise, JFP is positioned to capture an increasing share of the sewn fabric industry.

"The right people are doing the right jobs for the tasks at hand. It's not that we don't face challenges, but since the [MMTC] consultant worked with us, we have the perspective, skills, and technical know-how to work through them."

-Bob Jacquart, CEO

RESULTS



Added/retained **120** jobs



Doubled sales in one division



Developed a successful succession plan

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