

LEAN ON ME: COMPANY BENEFITS FROM VALUE STREAM MAPPING

ABOUT RADER AWNING AND UPHOLSTERY. Rader Awning & Upholstering, Inc. designs, manufactures and installs custom awnings, shade structures, and unique fabric products for both commercial and residential applications. The company has locations in Santa Fe and Albuquerque and employs over 20 people.

THE CHALLENGE. Rader Awning has grown to become the leading supplier in New Mexico for awnings and related products. During March through October, the company can be processing over 70 orders each month. Since each job is custom, there are many handoffs of information between sales, materials, and production. Due to the rapid growth of the company, the sales team did not have a standardized process for releasing orders to production. They were including a lot of written details about the job on the work order. This created problems for the production team who were highly skilled in assembly, fitting and sewing, but struggled in reading written English. As a result, the information was either misunderstood or had to be clarified, causing delays or defects. Finally, the production team received the orders in large batches, without a clear sense of priority according to due date and work content. Orders would often be “cherry-picked” by team members with the easier ones being completed first and the more difficult, time-consuming ones waiting until the end. As the customer deadline neared, the team would rush on the large jobs, causing defects, delays to the installation team, and additional defects at installation.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Previously, New Mexico MEP (NIST MEP affiliate) had worked with Rader Awning to provide Lean training and 5S for the production team which improved the organization of materials and supplies for the different departments. This time, however, Rader Awning needed to address its information processes through an Administrative Value Stream Map (VSM). Over the course of two days, New Mexico MEP worked with a team of employees from Sales, Materials, Production and Installation to evaluate the front office processes. They created a current state map which captured the steps from Sales, Design, Order Processing, Ordering Materials, Field Measurement, Scheduling Production, and Staging for Installation. Then the team reviewed and scrutinized each step for validity and appropriate assignment by asking - “Is it necessary? What is its purpose? When should it be done? Who should do it?” Through this process of scrubbing and evaluating, the team naturally developed improvement ideas for the future state, which were then captured on an action plan.

"New Mexico MEP has helped us to implement practical ways to prioritize orders for production and to provide information in a visual manner. This helps us to reduce the chaos and confusion, and create a team that knows exactly what they need to build and when they need to build it."

-Jill Mowery-Litt, Co-owner

RESULTS



20% improved productivity per sales associate



Reduced production defects by 15%



Reduced installation rework by 25%

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