

MANUFACTURER STRIVES FOR EXCELLENCE, EXPANDS OPERATIONS IN MEMPHIS

ABOUT WM BARR. Headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee, WM Barr produces solvents, removers, fuels, cleaning, and surface preparation products. The company maintains several manufacturing facilities and a national distribution center in the Memphis area. With over four hundred employees, WM Barr formulates its products through combinations of chemistry, biology, and technology. The company was established in 1946 and its trade statement is “we help people do whatever they do.”

THE CHALLENGE. WM Barr has embraced the principles of Lean Manufacturing. Recognizing that speed to market, continual improvements in efficiency, and leveraging inventory investment would improve competitiveness, the company decided to make a significant investment in workforce training. The senior leadership team reached out to the Tennessee Manufacturing Extension Partnership (TMEP), a NIST MEP affiliate, for assistance in training employees in operational excellence.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. WM Barr employees in leadership, management, and sales participated in TMEP's operational excellence training. The program included structured problem solving training and support for front-line employees, as well as kaizen events and a 5S exercise. 5S is a workplace organization tool that stands for Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize and Sustain. The senior leadership team developed and articulated a strategic plan, with goals relating to target markets, branding, and investing in automating manufacturing operations. The plan includes expanding WM Barr operations, as well as consolidating operations from China and adding jobs in the Memphis area.

RESULTS



\$12,000,000 new investment



Added/retained 219 jobs



\$1,100,000 award

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