

DEVELOPING LEADERS FOR GROWTH

ABOUT SHOWPLACE WOOD PRODUCTS, INC. For a company that has only been in business for about 18 years, Showplace Wood Products has an impressive history. The cabinet-making company, which started from scratch in 1999, now operates three manufacturing plants: two in Harrisburg, South Dakota, and one in nearby Beresford. Showplace has around 350 employees and a sales network that includes more than 600 approved dealers. The company does business in all 50 states and parts of Canada.

THE CHALLENGE. The cabinet industry was hit hard nationally by the Great Recession, which officially lasted from December 2007 to June 2009. Showplace was affected too, but the employee-owned company managed to ride out the downturn without laying off any workers. A desire to take care of people, regardless of whether they are customers, dealers or employees, has been a big part of company's success. The drive to constantly improve is evident in the company's willingness to invest in employees. Since 2014, 25 Showplace employees have participated in leadership-development classes offered by South Dakota Manufacturing & Technology Solutions (MTS), a NIST MEP affiliate.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Vice President Bill Allen was the first Showplace employee to participate in a MTS leadership-development class. He started taking classes from Precision in 2014 at the suggestion of Paul Sova, president and chief operating officer at Showplace. Sova got the idea for Allen to take a leadership-development course through his participation in the CEO Peer Council, another service offered by MTS. CEO Peer Council meetings give top-level executives from various companies the opportunity to get together on a regular basis to discuss common challenges that confront their companies. Allen participated in leadership-development classes at an off-site location with executives from a half-dozen other companies. The course included eight off-site sessions during a 12-week period. The classes for Showplace were facilitated by Lisa Te Slaa of the Precision Leadership Group Inc., one of MTS's service partners.

"I liked a lot of the basic principles the class taught us. In a lot of ways, what the class taught was common sense," Allen said. "They're things we all know we should do, but we may not have a structured way to get them done." Areas of focus included setting goals, managing time and delegating duties. Today, "business is good," said Scott Korsten, director of marketing. The training classes helped Showplace leaders to staff another plant with a new product line, and this year, Showplace expects to top its pre-recession high in sales.

"Classes required a significant financial investment, but it was an expense that should pay off in the long run. One solid business call per person could recover the cost of the class."

-Bill Allen, Vice President

RESULTS



25 employees participated in leadership development



Employees became more efficient and effective in their jobs over 12 weeks



Staffed new plant with 1 new product line

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