

CULTURE SHIFT SUPPORTS CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

ABOUT W. S. DARLEY & CO. W.S. Darley Company is a privately-owned manufacturing firm with headquarters in Itasca, Illinois. The W.S. Darley Company, Pump Division, of Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, employs around 50 people to design and build industry-leading water pump systems for mobile fire suppression systems. Customers include the U.S. Department of Defense, fire truck manufacturers, first responders, and a variety of other organizations across the world.

THE CHALLENGE. Facing increased competition in the global economy, W.S. Darley Company wanted to take its manufacturing operation to the next level of effectiveness. Company leaders contacted the Wisconsin Center for Manufacturing and Productivity (MOC), a NIST MEP affiliate, for assistance in reducing lead time and costs and developing a stronger culture of continuous improvement.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. MOC project managers met with the W.S. Darley Company leadership team and developed a recommended course of action. The project included Lean Training, Value Stream Mapping, and Kanban strategies. MOC helped the company to develop system performance measures to promote change, and they also made improvements to the production scheduling system. The team established an initial system to ensure more parts were at the assembly area than were scheduled to be there. Next, they implemented a set-up reduction process that produced initial results and changed the team's thinking around workplace improvements. The company improved on-time delivery, reduced work-in-process inventory, and increased productivity.

MOC worked with W.S. Darley Company to incorporate the best experience and knowledge of the team into a revised scheduling system. The new schedule integrated and merged Lean flow principles into the existing MRP system. The company reduced batch sizes, created work cells, and improved system performance measures to better reflect its new goals. The changes produced a culture shift that increased employee involvement and supported the company's commitment to innovation and continuous improvement. W.S. Darley Company created a Continuous Improvement team that continues to generate positive change on a weekly basis.

"Lean is about every process, every day, and the cultural shift to continuous improvement can be difficult. Working with MOC has allowed us to focus on employee empowerment to make changes on every level of the company."

-Amanda Normand, Design Engineer, Continuous Improvement Leader

RESULTS



On-time delivery improved to **98%** (up from 51%)



Work-in-process inventory reduced by **\$2 million**



Productivity increase of over **10%** resulting in lower costs



Significant culture shift towards involvement, innovation and change

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