

SONO-TEK CORPORATION EMBRACES LEAN INITIATIVES

ABOUT SONO-TEK CORP. Sono-Tek Corporation designs, manufactures, and installs precision ultrasonic spraying systems for different industries worldwide. The company was founded 42 years ago by Dr. Harvey L. Berger, the inventor of the ultrasonic nozzle. Sono-Tek's patented ultrasonic technology has replaced conventional spraying methods with more uniform, environmentally friendly, and efficient coating solutions. Sono-Tek is located in Milton, New York, and employs nearly 70 people.

THE CHALLENGE. Sono-Tek was facing a difficult fiscal year and increased international competition. The company needed to reduce the lead time for its most popular products. Sono-Tek's manufacturing process consisted of waiting for work orders to be received by the warehouse; workers then prepared kits of parts and placed the kits onto carts, and finally wheeled the parts to the floor to be assembled. This process resulted in excess handling and lead time.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Phil VanOss an engineer at the Manufacturing & Technology Enterprise Center (MTEC), part of the MEP National Network, worked with members of the Sono-Tek team to implement process improvements that would reduce lead time, improve efficiency, and reduce the amount of inventory on hand while maintaining or improving the quality of the product delivered.

The team implemented a new process that eliminated non-value added steps. The process allowed same day shipment of some domestic standard orders and freed up some of production control's time. The second project standardized drawings and made the drawings easier for manufacturing staff to interpret, thereby improving quality and speeding up production.

The third project set-up a Kanban and Point of Use Storage (POUS) pull system for standard nozzles. This system created smarter inventory management, which positively impacted lead time and inventory values. Sono-Tek cut back on much of their excess inventory and created automated and visual triggers to communicate when orders needed to be filled. This reduced lead time from four weeks to same day. They set up re-order points so when inventory was low, Sono-Tek knew exactly when to replenish inventory.

Sono-Tek now uses Lean Principles on a on-going basis. Employees work in teams to implement new lean projects in areas that need improvement.

"We learned that our teams already know what can be improved in our systems. Empowering them to make those improvements has our teams more engaged and has made our company more efficient and productive."

-Mr. Robert Engle, Vice President of Engineering

RESULTS



Increased Sales by **\$100,000**



Retained Sales by **\$200,000**



Cash Reserve Increased by **\$600,000**



\$50,000 invested in new automated systems

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