

LEAN TRANSFORMATION AND TRAINING RESULTS IN MORE ORGANIZED, EFFICIENT WORKPLACE

ABOUT SILFAB SOLAR. Itek's flagship facility is located in Bellingham, Washington, and prides itself on providing high-quality, assembled-in-America solar modules. Itek's experienced engineers, operators, and management team are passionate about solar energy and are dedicated to making a positive impact at a local, national, and global level. Itek has 85 employees.

THE CHALLENGE. Itek wanted to create a culture of continuous improvement through Lean training that would touch many areas of the company. Itek's leadership also wanted to enhance supervisor and production skills to maintain its commitment to quality and customer service as the company continued to grow.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Impact Washington, part of the MEP National Network™, provided training that included Lean Manufacturing, Toyota Kata, Training Within Industry, and other supervisory skills training. The training has led to significant reductions in the failure rate of finished products, more efficient production of products, and a more organized, efficient workplace. Improved employee morale is another benefit realized as a result of the training. Rework of nonconforming solar panels has dropped an astounding 80 percent due to the problem-solving and continuous improvement skills learned through the Lean Manufacturing and Toyota Kata training provided by Impact Washington.

These improvements were transferred over to a new, expanded facility on the Bellingham waterfront. Production of solar panels at the new facility began in October 2017. The improvements and the larger facility will allow Itek Energy to triple its production rates. Officials from the City of Bellingham and the Port of Bellingham attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony and shared their excitement at this addition to Bellingham's downtown waterfront area. Bellingham's Mayor Kelli Linville was on hand to say a few words, as was Rob Fix, Executive for the Port of Bellingham.

"Inspired by the challenges our world faces through a dependence on fossil fuels, we envisioned providing the world with a clean energy alternative by investing in a solar photovoltaic (PV) module manufacturing facility. Since beginning production in 2012, Itek has shipped enough clean, renewable energy to power over 4,000 homes. By working with Impact Washington and becoming lean and more efficient, Itek has been able to deliver more renewable energy to more customers."

-John Flanagan, Founder and CEO

RESULTS



Significant reduction in the failure rate of finished products



More efficient production of products



80% reduction in rework of nonconforming solar panels



Improved employee morale

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