

A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CREATES NEW EFFICIENCIES

ABOUT CHICKEN OF THE SEA. Over 100 years ago in southern California, Van Camp Seafood Company started canning the highly sought-after white albacore tuna. Fisherman and customers began to refer to the tuna as the “chicken of the sea” because of the mild flavor and texture of the fish and the name stuck. In 2000, the Chicken of the Sea packaging plant relocated to Lyons, Georgia and now employs over 250 people.

THE CHALLENGE. The Lyons plant can produce over 7 million cases of tuna per year, which means efficiency and a commitment to continuous improvement are important to maintain the plant’s operations. When Greg Riekhof, General Manager, joined the Chicken of the Sea team in 2016, he wanted to provide a fresh perspective and help generate new ideas by bringing in the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (GaMEP) at Georgia Tech, part of the MEP National Network™. During the initial assessment, the team identified several areas of the plant that could be improved using a series of lean techniques and hands-on projects.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. GaMEP helped the company to complete a value stream map of its canning process. From the map, they decided to dig deeper into their highest volume canning line using a set up reduction technique. GaMEP worked with managers, operators, and supervisors on the line to video and dissect the changeover into a series of essential tasks. They collaborated to identify and eliminate waste within those tasks. In addition, GaMEP helped them apply for a no-cost energy audit through the Georgia-North Florida Industrial Assessment Center. After the assessment, the team produced recommendations that included simple, low investment opportunities, like turning off air compressors during off-hours, and longer term solutions that would require investment in new equipment.

These initial projects also helped motivate the company to formalize and refine its daily improvement strategy. The management team developed a routine meeting with departments each morning, conducts daily improvement walks, and audits across the plant. They also implemented a system that triggers a root cause analysis, whenever the same issue is reported repeatedly. Guided by an emphasis on communication, innovative thinking, and the drive to meet and exceed their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), the company has truly created a culture of continuous improvement at the Lyons plant.

"I have worked with GaMEP for many years. GaMEP provides the essential resources to help get you started and also provides the specific skills instruction and train-the-trainer sessions, in order to continue the process in-house."

-Greg Riekhof, General Manager

RESULTS



Improved First Time Quality (FTQ) from **90.8%** to 95%



Projected **\$600,000** per year in cost savings



Production increased by **7,375** cases per month



25% improvement in operational equipment efficiency in the Label and Case department

CONTACT US



Georgia Tech
75 5th Street, NW Suite 3010
Atlanta, GA 30308



(404)894-3435



gamep.org

