

ENHANCING WORKER SKILLS IMPROVES MANUFACTURING  
COMPETITIVENESS**ABOUT HOWMAN ELECTRONICS DBA HOWMAN ENGINEERING.**

Howman Engineering designs and produces custom electronic and electromechanical control products. Based in Lebanon, New Jersey, the full-service supplier provides extensive expertise in Design for Manufacturability (DFM) and Design for Testing (DFT) procedures. With 15 employees, Howman Engineering's in-house engineering and management staff works closely with customers to provide exceptional on-time delivery and uphold a zero-deficit policy.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Howman Engineering relies on extensive business partnerships with local and regional contract manufacturers and top distributors of quality electronic and other critical components to stay competitive and manufacture in the United States. Because of this network, the company managed to maintain customer production schedules and deliveries throughout the turmoil of the 2004 and 2011 Pacific tsunamis and Superstorm Sandy in 2012. However, most of Howman's employees had never worked at other facilities and lacked exposure to other production techniques. To keep costs in line and gain a competitive edge, Howman needed to improve working methods and train its employees in best practices.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** The Delaware Valley Industrial Resource Center (DVIRC) referred Howman to the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP), part of the MEP National Network. NJMEP conducted a Lean Opportunity Assessment for the company and recommended Howard implement Lean production methodologies. Cost containment was an important requirement for Howman, as the company had recently made a number of capital investments. NJMEP helped Howman apply for a New Jersey Department of Labor Skills4 Jersey training grant to move the training along at a much faster pace than would otherwise have been possible.

Approval of the grant enabled NJMEP to conduct trainings for Howman employees in Value Stream Mapping and 5S workplace organization. It also supported an IPC Training and Certification program to improve soldering skills. The Value Stream Map gave employees the ability to analyze and improve processes, and 5S helped the company to organize the workspace for efficiency and effectiveness. Both tools are integral elements for implementing Lean manufacturing. In addition, Howman employees now have the skills to solder faster and with fewer defects. The company reduced costs, boosted sales, and reached an on-time delivery rate of close to 100 percent.

**"The training enabled our company to drive down the costs and inefficiencies in our process, allowing us to remain competitive in price and delivery times by introducing alternative methods of production. Our customers are very satisfied with our performance. We are planning on continuing the Lean training and possibly some supervisory training as well for some of our employees, and we will work with NJMEP again as we are very satisfied with the support that they have provided us."**

-Mitchell Ouverson, Purchasing/ Technician of Howman

**RESULTS**

Increased sales by **\$50,000**



Invested **\$10,000** in new processes



Gained **\$20,000** in cost savings



Achieved close to **100%** on-time delivery



Increased soldering speed by up to **15%**

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