

FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURER DEVELOPS STRUCTURED ON-THE-JOB TRAINING PROGRAM

ABOUT KCR MANUFACTURING. KCR Manufacturing designs and manufactures wildland firefighting equipment for forestry professionals throughout the world. Established in 1980, KCR was acquired by WATERAX in 2018, a leading distributor of forestry products and manufacturer of portable fire pumps. The company is based in Wood Village, Oregon, with around 10 employees.

THE CHALLENGE. KCR was taking a proactive stance on employee engagement. Management wanted to implement a structured on-the-job training program with defined development pathways, less repetitive work, and more variety for employees. Although turnover was traditionally low, KCR needed a sustainable internal training structure to quickly integrate new workers and upgrade incumbents. The company reached out to the Oregon Manufacturing Extension Partnership (OMEP), part of the MEP National Network, for assistance.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. OMEP worked with KCR to develop the on-the-job training program, analyzing the company's organizational structure and administrative processes, as well as the roles, responsibilities, and qualifications of each position. KCR referred to this training system as a mentorship program, with an emphasis on creating strong bonds between mentors and mentees. The program gave mentors a method for standardizing job training, setting them up to deliver consistent and relevant training sessions. Now, KCR employees have a clear path to job advancement and related compensation for increased skillsets.

Next, OMEP and KCR reformatted the training documentation to incorporate a variety of learning styles and concepts. The company uploaded training modules to a protected area of the company website, allowing employees to access materials and complete evaluations from their phones on the production floor. Providing this kind of accessibility also enables employees to quickly reference standard operating procedures and quality standards.

KCR's on-the-job training program increased work standardization, productivity, quality, and employee engagement. Reduced training times and improved process standardization generated cost savings for the company. In addition, the improvements positioned KCR to accept new orders, and the company expects to double annual sales. The workforce is expanding, with several new positions opening up to support the sales growth.

"Working with OMEP was a pleasure while developing the structured On the Job Training program at KCR. The staff were friendly and knowledgeable and used a holistic approach by tying in all areas of the business in need of development into the creation of a successful training program. They also provided us with the tools and skills necessary to continue to develop the program after initial setup, which is invaluable. We would definitely recommend OMEP's SMART Talent Program to other local manufacturers."

-Brandon McGee, General Manager

RESULTS



Cost savings of **\$256,000**



Retained sales of **\$900,000**



Forecasted to increase sales by **100%**



Created **4** new jobs, with plans to add 4 more

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