

PURDUE MEP PROJECT PUTS TECHNOLOGY ON DISPLAY

ABOUT HIGHTECH SIGNS. Hightech Signs was started in 1988 and is in their second generation of family ownership, with locations in Fort Wayne, Indianapolis and Grand Rapids. Over the company's tenure, they have grown from a regional sign company to a North American sign company. Hightech creates, engineers and manufactures large format digital graphics and signs for corporations and organizations with a strong focus on logistical solutions.

THE CHALLENGE. To efficiently implement the company's recently established Quality Management System, Hightech Signs' management realized a new software application was needed to run many aspects of the business. This quickly led to a need to expand from a peer-to-peer computer network to a server-based environment to run the new software. Further, the new server-based environment was necessary for added security and additional growth to the network. The company realized they needed help to successfully manage and implement the project.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Through Purdue University Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), part of the MEP National Network™, and their Indiana Next Generation Manufacturing Competitiveness Center (IN-MaC) program, the company received guidance on how to best implement the massive technology and software changes. With assistance from faculty at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW), Hightech Signs planned the change process. Together, they instituted the necessary training and implementation of a thoughtful change management system via expertise at the MEP. Purdue MEP provided Hightech with several options to smooth the transition and ensure uninterrupted data if the transition failed, including disaster recovery solutions, data recovery training, and data backup so no information would be lost.

As a result of the collaboration between Purdue and Hightech Signs, the company has fully transitioned from the old software to the new software. Purdue's IN-MaC program helped Hightech Signs complete the necessary training for the software, including train-the-trainer assistance. IPFW faculty provided the company with knowledge on how to effectively teach their employees on the new software through a variety of methods, such as auditory instructions, written instructions, or by doing the various steps.

RESULTS



Added approximately **4** people to the company.



Added **50%** more space to existing operation.



Created new efficiencies in order processing to automating customer service and order entry.



Sales growth 15%.

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"I believe we will continue to see sales growth. This growth allows Hightech Signs to continue to invest in equipment and staffing to further leverage our technology implementation completed with [Purdue University's] IN-MaC help. It also has allowed us to increase our data and network security and our necessary backup systems. We have also enhanced our ability to utilize business analytics. The first of many analytic processes included looking at our top 20 clients on a rolling 12 month basis tied to our new software and its database. We also are analyzing opportunities in the seasonality of our business cycle. Our plan is to use this as a filter to evaluate prospective clients and events by favoring those opportunities that will deliver business in traditionally off months."

-Doug Abramowski, President