

## ALMATIS TARGETS BOTTOM-LINE IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH THE TRAINING AND GUIDANCE OF ARKANSAS MANUFACTURING SOLUTIONS.

**ABOUT ALMATIS, INC.** Almatris Premium Alumina's Bauxite facility processes high-quality alumina to customer specifications supporting the ceramic, glass, and refractory industries. The facility employs approximately 150 people, approximately 84 of whom are production personnel. The company traces its history in Bauxite to 1952 when Alcoa opened a bauxite mine in the area and also giving the town its name. In 1952, and again in 1959, parts of Alcoa's chemical processes in East St. Louis, Illinois, were transferred to the Bauxite facility. The facility acted as a combination chemical and bauxite refining plant until the Arkansas bauxite mines were shut down in 1990. Today, the plant is one of Almatris' largest operations, producing tabular alumina and various grades of calcined alumina. The Arkansas facility, which includes two process lakes, is located on 400 acres. It receives feedstock via rail, and ships finished and semi-finished product by rail and truck. This site also includes a process analytical lab for customer testing.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Almatris had previous experience working with lean tools and utilizing those tools in the traditional point solutions approach that led to obvious improvements and positive results. The challenge, as expressed by Almatris, was to sustain continuous improvement. The company was interested in revitalizing its lean efforts and pursuing sustainability.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** Arkansas Manufacturing Solutions, part of the MEP National Network™, sought to create a program that would target bottom-line improvements through process cost reductions. A team of 18 people identified, managed and capitalized on opportunities within the manufacturing process.

Manufacturing Solutions led eight hours of Lean 101, including introductions to the improvement Kata. Then, the team utilized Leading Change to focus on individual responsibilities, human nature's tendency to oppose change, and exposure to the scientific process of continuous improvement. Sixteen hours of Value Stream Mapping was used to address the needs of a specific manufacturing line and office activities. Extra time was spent with the Almatris management team to assure they were ready for Kata delivery. A three-day Toyota Kata led to a \$12,000/month savings in the first two days of implementation, providing a full return on investment within the first 30 days of improvement. The company then requested a proposal to train an additional 80 employees in Lean 101 and Kata. The proposed trainings would consist of four groups of 20 employees followed by coaching to support the teams and get the projects off the ground.

## RESULTS



\$2.5 million in increased or retained sales over one year



160 new or retained jobs



\$200,000 in cost savings



\$475,000 in new investment

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 **ARKANSAS**  
Economic Development Commission  
MANUFACTURING SOLUTIONS

"The Manufacturing Solutions team understands our industrial workplace culture and speak our language, which made it easier to implement the Lean principles. Also, they know the pressures of corporate initiatives and were able to help us implement Lean principles that are compatible with our corporate initiatives and mandates."

-Dinesh Moorjani, Operation Manager