

TIMBER PRODUCTS: IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT WITH LEAN

ABOUT TIMBER PRODUCTS CO. Located in Munising, Michigan, Timber Products is a hardwood sawmill that manufactures a full range of lumber from premium northeastern hardwoods. Started in 1918 as a family business, Timber Products has grown to operate 10 manufacturing facilities, with 1,100 employees, across the nation. Timber Products provides a wide range of diversified wood products for use in high-end furniture, molding, cabinets, gym floors, pallets and railroad ties. Complete with an onsite veneer mill to service the plywood industry, Timber Products employs 160 at their Michigan location.

THE CHALLENGE. Jon Johnson, General Manager at Timber Products, wanted to identify the most effective ways to invest limited resources of time and money into the facility. Key to this assessment would be identifying cost savings and investment opportunities.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. The Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center - Northern Initiatives performed a Lean operational assessment of Timber Products. This process included developing a value-stream map of the operation, data mining and analyzing high-level operational metrics over a long-term period. After this was completed, it was recommended that Timber Products invest in automation to assist in the dryer feeding process and at the start of each wood pressing line in the veneer mill. Moving employees to higher paying and more value-added jobs also was recommended, with these changes being made soon after. Additionally, relocating the spray-gluing station in the veneer mill eliminated wasted motion of transporting clipped pieces, offering significant time savings.

"The Lean operational assessment done in our facility validated our challenges and opportunities before having to make a large commitment of our limited capital. The Center – Northern Initiatives team was professional, on-task, asked the right questions and delivered pointed and valuable suggestions for things that might have been otherwise overlooked."

-Jon Johnson, General Manager

RESULTS



\$16,800 cost savings from reduced run-time of equipment and replacement of lighting to LED



155 retained jobs with possible onsite expansion



\$50,000 in new investment for dryer feed automation

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