

NETWORKING LEADS TO READY-TO-IMPLEMENT IDEAS FOR
APPAREL COMPANY

ABOUT ASTRO APPAREL GROUP. Astro Apparel Group is a manufacturer and distributor of uniform-style clothing, primarily for the parochial and private school market, and private-label men's and women's business and business-casual attire. The Scranton-based company operates under a variety of different divisions, each with its own unique identity, including: RK Uniforms, which services the school market; Concorde Apparel, which handles fairly high-end attire; and the Bensol Group, which manufactures and distributes men's trousers.

THE CHALLENGE. As a domestic apparel company that began operations in the 1940s, the company has seen its fair share of challenges due to changing styles, changing material preferences, both recessionary and booming economies (which impact apparel choices, private school enrollment, the number of people in need of formal and business attire, etc.) and, of course, foreign competition. Staying ahead of the competition and continuing to think strategically in light of immediate challenges was consistently a concern to the company owners.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. In order to ensure that the company's leaders adopt a long-term, strategic view to the business and stay abreast of the latest technologies and business practices, Astro Apparel ownership sent its Chief Financial Officer to NEPIRC's Executive Network for each of the past three (3) years. Through his membership in the Executive Network, he was able to participate in plant tours, learn from guest speakers, engage in real-time business problem-solving activities, network with peers from across the region and leverage a sounding-board of other executives in a confidential environment of openness and trust.

By fully engaging in NEPIRC's Executive Network, Astro's CFO was able to bring business challenges to the table and walk away with workable suggestions and solutions. By implementing some of those suggestions and following-up on best practices and strategic thinking tools that were covered during Network meetings, the company saw a significant return on its Network investment. To date, Astro's CFO attributes more than \$1.5 million in new sales, \$550,000 of cost savings and the retention of at least nine jobs to ideas, concepts and suggestions that came out of the Executive Network meetings he attended over the past three years.

"Our company turns to NEPIRC because of their experience. They are hands-on and work through implementing the solutions they suggest. The Executive Network in particular is something our region really needs— and from which my company has benefited greatly. There's nothing else comparable at the local or regional level— nothing."

-Ronald Daniels, Controller/CFO

RESULTS



\$1,500,000 in increased or retained sales



\$550,000 in cost savings



9 retained jobs

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