

## LEAN MANUFACTURING PROCESSES INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY FOR AMERICAN EASEL

**ABOUT AMERICAN EASEL, LLC.** Since 1992, Salem-based American Easel, LLC, has been manufacturing a wide variety of artist products and materials, including painting easels & panels. Their painting panels are used in place of traditional canvas materials, offering customers a firmer painting surface. Display easels are meant for showcasing work effectively in a wide range of settings including tabletops, showcases, and galleries. Their line of artist easels and paint stations are used most effectively during the painting process.

**THE CHALLENGE.** In 2012 American Easel started implementing lean production practices within their manufacturing facility. Since those early stages of continuous improvement implementation, they have experienced significant growth. Throughout those years many of their staff who had implemented the lean production practices have retired, which made it challenging to sustain their changes. With the expectation of 30% growth in 2018, American Easel knew they had to revisit their lean processes and make changes to their initial lean manufacturing plans.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** American Easel evaluated their previous plan and started to revisit areas that needed attention. Partnering with the Oregon Manufacturing Extension Partnership (OMEP), a NIST MEP affiliate, they efficiently evaluated current state production through Value stream mapping & linearity charts. Their key areas of improvement included restoring a Kanban system for maintaining inventory and improving their pull practices. Additionally, they trained all employees in the importance of maintaining a balanced line and standard work. These alterations helped to better facilitate flow through American Easel's manufacturing process, and smooth out variations in labor for the large and small panels. During this re-implementation and training of lean manufacturing practices, OMEP and American Easel were able to reestablish a number of standardized processes across multiple product categories, which helped them stay on track with growth goals. American Easel saw a reduction in labor costs, resulting in a savings of \$32,760. Production capacity increased, leading to new sales of \$165,000 in addition to their current \$1.1 million in sales. American Easel has successfully implemented lean practices to build on its success. This time, with longevity of practice in mind.

## RESULTS



\$32,760 in cost savings



\$165,000 in increased or retained sales



Reestablished Standardization Process

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"Lean definitely works and OMEP has helped tremendously. With its help on the production side, it does make more time available for other issues."

-Tammy Forcier, Owner