

LEAN MANUFACTURING IMPROVEMENTS RESULT IN PRODUCTIVITY GAINS

ABOUT INDUSTRIAL HEATER CORP. Industrial Heater Corporation (IHCO) designs and manufactures a wide variety of standard and custom heaters for industrial processing applications. An ISO-certified company known for their development and production of Band Heaters, IHCO has nearly 100 years of experience in the manufacturing industry with an exemplary international reputation. Located in Cheshire, Connecticut, IHCO employs approximately 80 people.

THE CHALLENGE. Industrial Heater had worked diligently to build a reputation for producing reliable, quality products backed by solid customer service and on-time deliveries. Recently the company was experiencing longer lead times and delayed shipping. In addition, they were beginning to see a decline in information flow, excessive travel within office processes, and a lack of clear visibility to production requirements. As a result of these new developments, IHCO became interested in improving the productivity of their mica and sheet metal (hi-tech) order fulfillment processes. Company leadership was well aware of the benefits of lean manufacturing tools and techniques having previously participated in CONNSTEP's Continuous Improvement Champion Certification program.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. IHCO was seeking to use their knowledge of the value of Lean continuous improvement to achieve productivity gains in their order fulfillment processes and contacted CONNSTEP, part of the MEP National Network™, for assistance in reaching their goals. CONNSTEP Lean facilitator Martin Karbassioon met with the Industrial Heater team to review their challenges and discuss their goals and conducted a comprehensive process assessment of IHCO's Mica and Sheet Metal (Hi-Tech) order fulfillment processes. The project was designated as a Process Reengineering for Increased Manufacturing Efficiency (PRIME) event funded by the local electric utility Eversource with execution and implementation by CONNSTEP. The assessment process identified opportunities intended to have a positive impact on streamlining information and material flow with the mica and sheet metal value streams. Lean tools and techniques were taught to many of the IHCO workforce, introducing them to Kaizens, Standardized Work, 5S, Visual Management, Kanban stations, and the overall benefits of streamlining product flow and eliminating or reducing waste. CONNSTEP documented and measured the current state of the Mica and sheet metal process value stream. They also identified improvement opportunities towards building a future state value stream for each process with less waste and prepared an action plan to realize the future states.

"We found the value stream mapping exercise very beneficial, putting pen to paper to quantify processes, evaluating them with actions to tackle them, and giving us a fresh approach."

-Tom McGwire, Vice President, Business Development Industrial Heater Corp.

RESULTS



\$50,000 in cost savings



\$20,000 in retained sales



4 created or retained jobs



Increased investments in new products, equipment, training:
\$15,000

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