

HOW BOB'S REDMILL NATURAL FOODS LEARNED TO THINK DIFFERENTLY

ABOUT BOB'S RED MILL, INC. Bob's Red Mill was founded in 1978 to provide wholesome stone-ground flour and grain to local markets. In 2010, after years of successful growth, ownership of the company was transferred to its employees through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP). Bob's Red Mill currently employs over 600 staff with four production shifts at the Milwaukie facility.

THE CHALLENGE. OMEP, part of the MEP National Network™, was invited to help the continuous improvement team build an effective training and development process so that they could grow the entire organization's capacity for ongoing operational excellence. Bill Lozier, Chief Operating Officer stated, "We wanted a structured approach to getting better on the shop floor. We wanted to know how to measure ourselves. How do we learn from our mistakes and make improvements? We didn't have a clear structure to do this."

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. OMEP's on-site consultants adopted a blended continuous improvement approach with Bob's Red Mill, focusing on problem solving, capacity creation and culture building. To do this, OMEP worked closely with the operations leadership team to identify which processes to focus on. Safety, in general, was selected as the vehicle for problem-solving training. It was accessible and relatable to everyone in the plant and didn't require special technical knowledge. The new equipment installation process was also selected as a target area to teach project management and build production capacity. In each case, OMEP created customized training for the Bob's Red Mill team and then used real-world projects to practice new skills. Additional continuous improvement tools such as visual tracking boards at the packaging lines, Gemba walk routines, and individual leadership coaching engagements were included, allowing Bob's Red Mill develop their culture not only in Operations but also in HR, New Product Development, and Customer Service. In terms of both sales and production, Bob's Red Mill continues to experience record weeks compared to where they were last year. Finally, OMEP's expertise proved invaluable with the recruiting and hiring of personnel in the engineering department. The workload has been balanced out, improving the efficiency of the engineering team. Even in the time of COVID-19 and social distancing, OMEP has remained an important partner to Bob's Red Mill and continues to support their continuous improvement initiatives.

"By working with OMEP our workforce, from the floor staff on up, discovered a new way of operating and thinking. We can apply this to any project or problem. We originally came to OMEP to learn about increasing machine productivity, but we have instead created an entirely new, more effective method of working."

-Bill Lozier, CEO

RESULTS



20% reduction in installation time for new equipment



5% packaging line productivity improvement



Improved continuous improvement culture across all departments



Balanced workload for engineering staff through improved recruiting, hiring and training

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