

## LEAN TRAINING SERVES AS A SPRINGBOARD TOWARD CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AT AMBER WAVES

**ABOUT AMBER WAVES INC.** Amber Waves, a family-owned business located in Richardton, ND, was founded in 2002. They engineer and construct high quality hopper bottom bins for storing different products including grain, fertilizer, and frac sand. The company also manufactures overhead structures and other accessories to complement the hopper bins. Amber Waves works with customers from start to finish on customizing a single storage bin to a complete industrial sized commercial operation.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Originally the client had contacted Impact Dakota asking for availability of training Lean basics and one-piece flow for key shop floor workers. A tour of the client's facility and meetings with several people, including the engineering manager, led to identification of training topics and outcomes which can help with the goal of continuously improving production and operations. After the visit, an outline of training activities as well as suggestions for improving some of the manufacturing processes and material handling was submitted to the client.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** Impact Dakota, part of the MEP National Network™, put together training materials and delivered on site. The training included coverage of Lean fundamentals with major focus on waste reduction and pull/Kanban system. The training also included a factory-wide walk to solicit input on how the company/participants go about implementing the tools and systems learned in class. Twelve employees participated in the training including supervisors and shop floor workers as well as the company's general manager and engineering manager. The training served as a springboard toward achieving the goal of continuous improvements. It provided a common understanding of wastes; and how to reduce or eliminate the wastes. After the training, follow-up calls by Impact Dakota learned about the progress. The employees are now much more aware of different types of wastes and some of them are more open to sharing ideas to improve productivity. Notable example include a designer technician has been evaluating products/components design for better manufacturability that can lead to reduced cost. Another example is reconfiguring process flow where subassembly components have been reduced to a manageable batch, resulting in reductions in multiple handling of components.

"Impact Dakota's training tools and manuals are well written, allowing for quick understanding of new manufacturing concepts. We were able to go on to our shop floor four hours into the training and find bottlenecks that could easily be improved. Reza as an instructor made sure everyone in the training understood the topics we covered before moving on by asking our production team questions about the topics and how they related to our company."

-Brent Swanson, Engineering Manager

## RESULTS



2,500-2,700 hours saved



\$100,000-\$110,000 in annual cost savings



5% gain in productivity of labor

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