

“LEANING” IN FOR MORE TEA TIME

ABOUT TUMBLEWOOD TEAS. Founded in 2009 and based in Big Timber, Montana, Tumblewood Teas, a women-owned company, offers a selection of over 100 varieties of whole leaf teas imported from growers around the world and blended with the freshest ingredients available. All packaging is done locally, and their sweet clover and alfalfa honey products are produced by the bees of Montana's Sweetgrass County

. The artisan teas carry playful western names and offer the true "essence of the West" in every cup as they strive to honor the history of tea and the legacy of the American West. Products may be purchased on the company website and are found at numerous retail locations and restaurants throughout Montana.

THE CHALLENGE. In order to achieve their mission of providing quality products while maintaining high customer service and strong relationships, Tumblewood Teas owners, Riza Gilpin and Laurie Rennie, wanted to reduce waste and increase efficiency. Located in a small agricultural town on the banks of the Yellowstone River, the company was also faced with navigating the workforce limitations of a rural community. Improving efficiency could also help them grow the company in spite of this challenge.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Riza and Laurie engaged with MMEC, part of the MEP National Network™, and began their journey for efficiency with training. They first invested in a value stream mapping (VSM) event provided by MMEC for two employees. VSM is a cornerstone of profitable manufacturing and provides managers with a picture of an entire process, both value and non-value-creating activities (“waste”).

MMEC then provided a two-hour on-site overview on the lean process for the entire staff. To better understand the current state and to begin to identify opportunities for improvement, the full staff worked together to create a SIPOC (supplier, input, process, output, customer) diagram. The team identified four improvements to focus on: optimize blend process, right size equipment, improve process flow, and optimize shipping process.

While the process is ongoing, Tumblewood has now created a lean culture and is continually looking for more growth opportunities, including increasing output without adding additional footprint.

"The training and project with MMEC were a wonderful beginning point to get started. The knowledge and skills gained are allowing for continuous improvements to processes and further efficiency gains."

-Riza Gilpin, Owner

RESULTS



Reduced production travel by
50%



3-5% overproduction waste
eliminated by total product



\$48,000 Cost Savings

CONTACT US



PO Box 174255, Montana
State University
2310 University Way Bldg 2,
Ste 1
Bozeman, MT 59717-4255



(406)994-3812



www.montana.edu/mmec

