

AMERICAN SOY PRODUCTS, INC.: ESTABLISHING A COMPANY-WIDE COMMITMENT TO LEAN

ABOUT AMERICAN SOY PRODUCTS, INC. American Soy Products Inc. (ASP) was established in 1986 as one of the first soy milk producers in the United States. ASP now specializes in co-packing a wide range of organic and conventional food products, including cooking stocks and broths, juices, soups, pet foods, and water and supplement drinks. Operating for more than three decades, ASP has earned a reputation for producing high-quality products, with food safety and product consistency being their top priorities. ASP employs more than 100 at their Saline, Michigan, facility.

THE CHALLENGE. ASP has a long-standing commitment to continuous improvement through ongoing employee training. Following a promotion to plant manager, an ASP staff member who previously attended the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center's (The Center) Lean Manufacturing Champion program recognized an opportunity to improve the business by training other employees on Lean principles. With support from the management team, ASP employees completed a variety of transformational training with The Center, part of the MEP National Network™.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. To begin, all eight shop floor managers at ASP participated in The Center's Lean Manufacturing Champion training to further drive business growth. ASP was running 12 days on and two days off, with capacity completely maxed out. Working with The Center's experts, the ASP team identified two main areas to address - the 'inspect & clean' and 'print booklet & install' steps. The team determined both of these steps could be done while their machine was still running, which would save 20 minutes per changeover. This would translate to producing 500 additional cases per day, or 144,000 additional cases per year, generating \$331,000 in added annual revenue.

Following Lean Manufacturing Champion training, the ASP maintenance team engaged in The Center's 5S training to address several areas in production. The paper fill area had the greatest room for improvement. The team worked to organize the area and striped the floor to mark where only boxes being staged for production were permitted, helping to significantly reduce congestion. The ASP team was fully engaged in the training process and developed auditing documents to ensure their improvements would be sustained. Investing in this lean training has enabled ASP workers at all levels to better support lean processes in the facility.

"We believe that good, quality food can only be achieved with good people. We want to move 'the people' up the priority list right next to 'food safety.' People development is key if we are going to be successful in expanding our business and increasing our efficiency."

-Ron Berger, HR Manager

RESULTS



\$2,000,000 in retained sales



\$500,000 in new sales



\$250,000 in cost savings



\$50,000 in new investment



2 new jobs, 15 retained jobs

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