

FACILITY SITE SELECTION & PROCESS FLOW LAYOUT

ABOUT THE PUSSUMS CAT COMPANY. The Pussums Cat Company is a small Maine family-owned business that provides premium Dr. Pussums Brand catnip toys, and cat lover gifts, using 100% of the finest quality all-natural catnip, diverse fabrics, and unique graphics. The toys are all hand-sewn with great care by skilled Maine stitchers to please even the most finicky felines and their families. The company, located in Turner, Maine, is operated by Susan Shaw, her husband Eben, and their two sons. They employ three part-time employees and 11 contract stitchers.

THE CHALLENGE. During the winter of 2018, Susan and her husband purchased the business from her in-laws and were looking to increase profitability while growing the business. Susan needed assistance relocating the business and improving efficiency. At the time, the business was located in the previous owner's garage with very limited space which was not designed to run a business! Pussums Cat Company through a referral from SBDC in early 2108, just after Susan and her husband purchased the business. When the company needed help finding a new location (and layout) uniquely suited to the business' needs, the Shaws turned to Maine MEP.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Maine MEP participated in the evaluation of each potential new location. Once the new location was selected, Maine MEP worked directly with Susan to determine the best utilization of space. This was done through the use of lean concepts to get the most efficiency possible. The following were applied to the operation: point of use storage, FIFO inventory methods, mobilized equipment & storage rack with wheels, wall mount fabric roll dispenser for simple fabric handling while cutting, and overall flow of operations.

Once the business was settled into a new location there were additional areas for improvement identified including lack of inefficiency in stuffing the sacks with catnip and closing them by sewing through four layers of fabric. Susan also expressed interest in expanding the business into new markets. Traditionally, sales were obtained either through wholesale accounts or direct to customer sales at fairs and other events. Lack of direct retail presence was limiting sales potential.

"Wayne was instrumental in helping us determine the setup of the new manufacturing space. Workflow was optimized, new workspaces designed with built in efficiencies and better FIFO inventory measures were put in place from materials storage to printed panels to finished inventory. The support that Wayne, through MEP, has provided for us from the beginning to is truly immeasurable and so very appreciated. It gives me, as a small business owner the security of knowing that we have support, particularly outside our area of expertise. It is almost as though we have a silent partner that we can depend on to help brainstorm problem solutions, recognize areas of concern we may not have recognized and help to keep us focused on what we can control and has the most positive impact on our business."

-Susan Shaw, Owner

RESULTS



Increased manufacturing space by **2100** square feet.



3% sales increase



40% reduction in uncut fabric inventory



20% improvement in internal cut sew fill pack operations



Added a retail space

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