

STERMAN MASSER OPTIMIZES PERFORMANCE THROUGH MRC-LED LEAN TRAINING

ABOUT STERMAN MASSER FARMS. Sterman Masser Potato Farms and the Masser family have been growing and delivering quality potatoes to the nation's finest retailers and foodservice operators for more than eight generations. Located in the Pennsylvania Dutch region of the Hegins and Lykens Valleys, Masser Potato Farms combines years of potato farming experience with the latest growing technology to deliver quality potatoes at the best value.

THE CHALLENGE. Sterman Masser recognized the need for cultural and process enhancements during a number of changes that impacted their facility and personnel. Among a long list of food safety, maintenance, and other projects, Sterman Masser engaged MRC, part of the Pennsylvania MEP and the MEP National Network™, for Lean 101/Enterprise Overview and Lean Master Certification training. A primary lesson of this training is how to look at problems differently in order to develop effective solutions for all levels.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. "Too often, evaluating a problem from a high-level results in the given response, and other operations are forced to align as a result," says Sterman Masser's Training and Lean Improvement Coordinator Ron Whitmoyer. "With lean methodology, that's changed. We're trying to engage everyone in the process, so everyone needs an understanding of the changes. There is room for negotiation in the process so you can make continuous improvements."

Whitmoyer says the Lean Master class taught that success sometimes requires a bit of failure. "If you start in one direction, and it's not working, that's valuable information. You need to pivot; that failure helps you more clearly see the actual route to success."

Because theirs is a living product, Sterman Masser's process also demanded real-time data. "We were always looking at yesterday's data, and that wasn't fast enough," Whitmoyer says. "Product that is good today might not be tomorrow. After attending an Industry 4.0 Lunch and Learn, some of our team members saw the value of real-time data to display real-time information on the plant floor. They brought the vision back to management, which spurred the development of a process using Google Sheets to present the information. Workers not only observe the need to change on their own, but they are empowered to make those changes or come to me and recommend things to improve."

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-Ron Whitmoyer, Training and Lean Improvement Coordinator

RESULTS



\$50,000 in cost savings with lean coaching and certification improving production



Implemented robotic palletizing to eliminate repetitive operations



Automation reduces injuries and helps to draw/retain workers



Employees are empowered to make changes and recommend improvements

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