

FELKER BROTHERS: SMART AUTOMATION LEADS TO A SOLD RETURN ON INVESTMENT

ABOUT FELKER BROTHERS CORPORATION. Felker Brothers Corporation is a leading manufacturer of stainless steel piping products and fabricated piping systems located in Marshfield, Wisconsin, with manufacturing operations in Glasgow, Kentucky. The company is family-owned and employs 275. Felker Brothers services industries throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, and more.

THE CHALLENGE. Felker Brothers has goals to grow the company. A new process development committee was the first step toward developing an innovation culture, sustainable growth process, the skill set that can identify, evaluate, and implement new manufacturing process capabilities. The long-term goal is to foster and grow the next generation of business leaders and to have the organizational capability to capitalize on new sales, market, and product opportunities.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Project managers from the University of Wisconsin-Stout Manufacturing Outreach Center (MOC), part of the Wisconsin MEP and the MEP National Network™, helped Felker Brothers implement a custom innovation management system for their product development committee. The system helped generate and capture ideas, screen and score, and manage approval of implementation projects.

The new process development committee set objectives to move the company's initiatives forward. First, the team needed to review opportunities to develop new product ideas using current manufacturing capabilities or identify what future capabilities would be needed to manufacture these products. Then staff had to investigate new market opportunities using current manufacturing capabilities and/or future capabilities needed to enter a new market. Next, the committee identified opportunities to improve current processes or develop new processes to reduce cost, improve lead-time, enhance quality, or improve safety in manufacturing.

"With the guidance and instruction from MOC, we have developed a process to evaluate projects and processes that determine benefits to the company and the confidence of solid ROI."

-Jeff Wefel, Chief Operations Officer, Felker Brothers Corporation

RESULTS



25% production/cost reduction in pipe cutting equipment



10% Flex Drill sales increase with production/cost reduction of 50%



5% productivity improvement with production/cost reduction of 35% with Mazak Machining Center

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