

VALUE STREAM MAPPING HELPS LOST ART CULTURED FOODS
“FIND” TIME AND INCREASE PRODUCT QUALITY

ABOUT LOST ART CULTURED FOODS. Lost Art Cultured Foods in Cranston, Rhode Island, batch-produces fermented vegetable products by hand, using only organic produce, sea salt and spices. Owner Kaylyn Keane and co-owner/husband Padraic first conceived of the company when Kaylyn was working in Australia with a non-profit that encouraged reduction of food waste. Sauerkraut was one method of preserving vegetables. After returning to Rhode Island the entrepreneurs began experimenting and founded the company in 2015.

THE CHALLENGE. By 2017, Lost Art was selling via both wholesale and retail. The team anticipated increases in demand but was challenged by the lack of a production plan. Hand-mixing each batch of sauerkraut since 2015, the owners said “there was a lot of wasting time, waiting for information, and training people took a long time.” Lost Art needed to increase production without adding workers or increasing labor costs. A second goal was to increase food quality control while remaining vigilant about food safety. Mistakes were reducing morale and costing valuable time. After seeing a short Polaris MEP “Lean Tip” video, Keane reached out to Polaris MEP, part of the MEP National Network™.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. First, Polaris MEP conducted a sauerkraut production VSM (value stream mapping) to define the current state and generate the desired future state of production. After identifying gaps in the future state the team created a detailed plan. Then Project Manager Nathan Bonds led a Kaizen even, guiding the team in addressing the gaps. With Polaris MEP's help Lost Art Cultured Foods reduced the amount of time the workforce was waiting and unproductive. Keane said that they also reduced waste and mistakes. Small changes - Keane said many cost nothing - led to big results. For example, a whiteboard shows the production plan for the entire week, including what needs to be ordered ahead of time. Before VSM, Lost Art had three people in the kitchen for production. “Because of the changes we've made through our work with the value stream map, we're now able to do the process with two people,” said Keane, “or flexibly take advantage of a third worker to meet orders in a shorter shift.” The VSM also benefited discussions with investors. “The value stream mapping and the Kaizen process has definitely added value to the business,” said Keane. “Everyone that I've spoken to about investing in the company has been impressed that we've done it. There's value in investors knowing that we thought about this, and that we are running an efficient operation.”

“When we started the value stream mapping, that was really the first time that myself, my husband, or any of our production team had actually thought through the process, about why we were doing each step. Our experience with Polaris MEP allowed us time to think it through, introduce things slowly, to work through the process. Then, when we did the Kaizen at the end, and everybody contributed to the changes -- I was impressed by the buy in from the staff.”

-Kaylyn Keane, Owner

RESULTS



10-20% reduction in sauerkraut packing time



1 hour of time saved per shift waiting for materials or information, or in excess processing



\$1,560 in annual labor savings



87.5% reduction in annual defects rate (dropped from .4% to fewer than .1% of production)



Increased profit margin per jar through reduction of labor costs and defects for the same output

CONTACT US



315 Iron Horse Way
Providence, RI 02908



(401)270-8896



www.polarismep.org

