

ONEIDA AIR SYSTEMS SUPPORTS GROWTH WITH TOYOTA KATA AND LEAN MANUFACTURING

ABOUT ONEIDA AIR SYSTEMS. Oneida Air Systems (OAS) was founded in 1993 in a garage on Oneida Lake in New York. From that humble beginning the company sought to provide industrial-grade dust collection products and technology to smaller wood working operations. Since then OAS has dedicated operations to the innovative design of high-quality dust collection systems that help create a safe, healthy, and practical workplace environment in various applications including woodworking, concrete finishing, among others. OAS is a world-renowned industry leader in workshop hygiene and dust collection, and the company strives to provide quality US jobs with excellent working conditions and benefits for employees.

THE CHALLENGE. OAS needed to establish operational excellence and rapid fulfillment as a new competitive advantage in the midst of numerous external obstacles. OAS' research and development team regularly creates the most innovative solutions in the world, but their products were being copied by competition at a faster rate than they had ever seen before. At the same time, foreign competitors were warehousing products in the United States and offering faster delivery, so decreasing overall lead time was critical even with the expanding volume. TDO, part of the New York MEP and the MEP National Network™, was approached to provide expert mentoring.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. OAS initially decided to focus their improvement efforts on a value stream for an innovative new product. The technological advantages of the new product design were expected to result in more sales volume than the product it was replacing. TDO recommended OAS focus on practicing Toyota Kata. Toyota Kata is a systematic approach for developing sustaining daily continuous improvement efforts, and it introduces different skills and lean manufacturing tools only as they are needed. TDO facilitated a value stream mapping kaizen event to ensure that the current state and future state challenges were well understood. After an initial introduction to Toyota Kata, TDO took on the role of "coach". TDO continued to coach 2-3 mornings per week until OAS personnel became proficient at using the "Improvement Kata" pattern and scientific thinking. TDO then shifted their coaching focus to develop OAS' internal coaching capability so that they could spread daily continuous improvement throughout their organization. Since its initial inception, Toyota Kata has now been practiced in fabrication, assembly, shipping, purchasing, and inside sales departments, as well as strategically at the operations management level. TDO is currently providing assistance with product design for manufacturability and layout for a new production line.

"Previous OAS attempts at lean had focused on episodic event-based improvement. Our TDO advisor suggested we try practicing Toyota Kata to establish a habits of daily continuous improvement. TDO helped facilitate a value stream mapping exercise to understand the current condition and possible future state that would allow us to meet the challenge provided by the company president."

-Mark Evertz, Operations Manager

RESULTS



\$75,000 in cost savings annually from hidden factory transactions and transportation



70-85% reduction in lead-time to deliver the focus product



50% growth year over year



50% labor content reduction from new products.



Increased flexibility and scientific thinking among workforce

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