

## FLEXFAB: PREVENTING OFFSHORING WITH LEAN & KATA TRAINING

**ABOUT FLEXFAB INC.** Founded in 1961, Flexfab is headquartered in Hastings, Michigan, where they have proprietary processes of compounding, calendaring, extruding, molding, and bonding silicone rubber, organic rubber and reinforcing materials. Their primary markets include aerospace, automotive, heavy truck parts, rail and distribution. In addition to their Michigan headquarters, where they employ 450, Flexfab also has locations around the world in Brazil, China and England.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Due to competitive pressure, Flexfab was considering moving some of its operations to China. This move would significantly displace many individuals from the local workforce and impact the hometown economy. To keep their Hastings location competitive, Brian Bowman, VP of Operations, reached out to the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center - West (The Center-West), part of the MEP National Network™, for expert guidance. Following a review of the value stream, a structured operating system assessment was provided by The Center-West to develop a plan of action.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** The Center-West provided lean production and office champion training and implemented Kata Method training through the Flexfab leadership team. A project-based implementation plan was executed to systematically optimize the value stream for cost reductions. The lean training services not only reduced their costs associated with production, but also enabled the company to become cost competitive with the Chinese operations. The Flexfab leadership team now has the ability to re-shore product where it makes sense and to manufacture product in the region in which the customer will use it. The Kata training has matured to the third generation of practitioners and remains a standard for the business.

"The Center-West has continued to provide knowledgeable mentorship to our Flexfab team. The Kata methodology has transformed the way we think and work, to use scientific thinking to drive improvements and to standardize our work to reduce variation in our processes. We have utilized Kata to make impressive gains to our profitability and competitiveness. I am thankful for The Center-West for teaching us a better way to manufacture our product."

-Brian Bowman, VP Operations

## RESULTS



15 jobs created, 10 jobs retained



\$7,000,000 in increased sales re-shored from China



\$1,200,000 in cost savings



\$820,000 in new investment in plant & equipment



\$680,000 in retained sales

## CONTACT US



45501 Helm St.  
Plymouth, MI 48170



(734)451-4200



[www.the-center.org](http://www.the-center.org)

MICHIGAN

MANUFACTURING

TECHNOLOGY

CENTER