

TWO MAINE COMPANIES PIVOT TOGETHER

ABOUT ALFRED'S UPHOLSTERY & CO. Alfred's Upholstery in Alfred, Maine, furnishes yacht interiors, builds custom furniture and creates tailored upholstery and soft goods. Their reputation for superior quality, design and function has helped them secure work with premier boat builders and designers in Maine. Accomplishments include the 2019 Maine Small Business Manufacturer of the Year Award from the U.S. Small Business Administration and a 2021 Marine Fabricators Association (MFA) Fabrication Excellence Award.

THE CHALLENGE. Covid-19 hit Maine's boatbuilding industry especially hard. While builders had orders to fill they could not reasonably ask their crews to do their normal jobs which require close proximity. This resulted in a complete shutdown of all of Alfred's OEM clients. This segment of their business provided in excess of 60% of Alfred's monthly revenue and other segments were weakening as well. No one could predict how long this situation would last. After a complete reset of the shop to distance their workers, Alfred's finished all the orders that were in process at their client's sites.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Bill Whittier, part of Maine MEP and the MEP National Network™, contacted Alfred's Upholstery initially to work on finding suitable non-woven materials for the manufacture of face coverings. Together Alfred's and MEP located a solution for this problem and furnished other Maine manufacturers with rolls of high-tech fabric used for keeping expensive on-deck yacht components dry and mildew free - a perfect match for mask making. The focus then turned to how to keep Alfred's 17 employees working. MEP was working concurrently with Flowfold, a manufacturer of minimalist wallets and outdoor gear, to develop a face shield product. Flowfold had access to an abundant supply of clear, lightweight plastic and was quickly able to secure contracts with the State of Maine, hospital systems and school districts. In addition, Flowfold was quick to get product up on their e-commerce site and Amazon. Within two weeks there was demand for 500,000 face shields. This was way beyond Flowfold's capacity and Devin McNeill, Flowfold's CEO, turned to Maine MEP. Within hours Bill had the two companies on the phone and within one-week Alfred's was manufacturing face shields. Each week during the six-month engagement Alfred's production increased to the point that they were making 30,000 face shields a week. Flowfold's shield sales surpassed 1 million before slowing.

"Bill Whitter from MEP helped our company to pivot during the worst pandemic in history. Bill connected us with Devin McNeil, CEO of Flowfold, and we immediately partnered with Flowfold to make PPE. This allowed us to not only retain our employees, but we add an additional 15 employees to our organization. During the most challenging times we have ever faced Alfred's Upholstery & Co. was able to survive and be profitable. The passion and commitment Bill and MEP have for Maine small businesses is an amazing asset for all Maine businesses!"

-Troy Delano, President Alfred's Upholstery & Co.

RESULTS



15 jobs created/ 17 jobs retained



\$200,000 in annual labor savings due to CNC scanning and cutting table investment



\$100,000 investment in a CNC scanning and cutting table



Retained sales at 2019 level during 2020 pandemic

CONTACT US



87 Winthrop Street
Augusta, ME 04330-5554



(207)623-0680



www.mainemep.org

MAINEMEP 