

## GETTING OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT IN MONTANA: MMEC HELPS SANDAL COMPANY WITH FACILITY DESIGN

**ABOUT BEDROCK SANDALS.** Bedrock Sandals crafts lightweight, durable sandals for both recreational and everyday wear. The founders, who met while working on river restoration projects, started making the first sandals by hand for themselves and friends in 2011. With a focus on creating sandals that are simple, durable and repairable, the company has expanded its operations to include three lines of sandals plus apparel, which are sold nationally and internationally. In 2019, the company relocated to Missoula, Montana, to establish a new headquarters that would be close to mountains, rivers, and wilderness, offering year-round opportunities to test new products. The facility, which employs approximately 7 people, was originally designed to house staff offices, a flagship store, and a workshop for repairs.

**THE CHALLENGE.** The COVID-19 pandemic hit shortly after Bedrock moved its operations to Missoula. While the company had initially planned to subcontract its manufacturing work, it lost a principal supplier when the supplier switched to production of personal protective equipment (PPE). Bedrock proposed to start small-scale manufacturing on-site by reconfiguring the repair machines and workshop space for production. The company leadership sought out local expertise to quickly, efficiently, and safely start-up production and turned to MMEC, part of the MEP National Network™.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** MMEC Business Advisor Lynn Weddle worked with Bedrock's leadership to map out a plan to implement production in the relatively small workshop area. She offered guidance on the layout design, using lean principles to optimize the use of space. To ensure that employees could work safely and efficiently in the reconfigured area, she conducted ergonomic assessments, developed recommendations for COVID safety protocols, and assisted with scheduling plans. MMEC had the opportunity to offset the fees for this project, using CARES Act Funding the Center received to help manufacturers negatively impacted by the pandemic.

"When we lost our primary supplier early in the pandemic, we knew we had to adapt quickly if we were going to keep producing sandals," said Co-Founder Nick Pence. "MMEC was able to help us evaluate the most efficient way to produce sandals in our small space as well as helping us navigate the other complexities of in-house manufacturing during the beginning of the COVID pandemic. This process ultimately saved us time and helped us come to clear decisions on how to move forward. We still use parts of the layout ideas and processes in our space currently to help with our in-house production and repair programs, helping them operate safely and efficiently."

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-Nick Pence, Bedrock Co-Founder

## RESULTS



\$145,000 in retained sales



\$60,000 in avoided unnecessary investment



\$30,000 in investment in new products



\$9,000 in cost savings



\$3,600 in workforce investment

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