

## FOOD MANUFACTURER TAKES KATA TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL THANKS TO VIRTUAL COLLABORATION

**ABOUT READY FOODS, INC.** Ready Foods was founded in 1972 by Luis Abarca, a Mexican immigrant. Their first kitchen was located in a small meat plant located under the Colfax viaduct. In 1992, the reins of leadership were passed onto his children Marco and Adrianna. They have been able to grow the business from a small facility to four modern food plants with over 200,000 square feet of combined production and storage space in Denver, Colorado. The company now employs over 300 people.

**THE CHALLENGE.** In early 2020, five teams from Ready Foods attended a Kata training taught by Manufacturer's Edge, part of the MEP National Network™. The teams consisted of supply chain, human resources, quality assurance, QA support, and training. Their initial year-one goals included everything from reducing scheduling changes by 80% and increasing morale to increasing sales and achieving a 95% employee retention rate. Prior to this training, the Ready Foods team had never even heard of the term Kata. After a few weeks of meeting daily around the Kata board, however, they could no longer imagine functioning without the tools they had learned and adopted. Simultaneously, of course, the world was shifting and there were some surprises in store for the budding Kata practitioners. In mid-March, Ready Foods was one of the first companies in Colorado to implement social distancing and work-from-home accommodations. Working remotely is commonplace now, but the Ready Foods team was understandably nervous about the transition at the time. How could they maintain the engagement and results they were seeing in person if they couldn't gather onsite?

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** Initially, the employees who were working from home relied on the in-person team members to continue utilizing the physical tools to which they had grown accustomed. Eventually, they created virtual boards on Excel and Google that could be updated and shared in real-time. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic as well as virtual/hybrid collaboration, thanks to the tools and training they received from Manufacturer's Edge, the Ready Foods team was able to continue reaping the benefits that come from challenging the status quo and discovering new efficiencies. As a result of their Kata work, for example, they were able to increase their food safety checks by 10 minutes - exceeding the regulatory guidelines, thus saving Ready Food money and allowing them to pass the savings onto their customers.

In the past two years, Ready Foods has expanded their Kata practice into a total of 10 different teams each working on a different aspect of the business. They have even started a Toyota Kata book club! Regardless of what the future holds, they have no intention of letting go of their commitment to set goals and use data to test their beliefs in order to work smarter and collaborate more effectively as a team.

**"Kata has helped us question the status quo which makes us better as a team and better for our customers. Once you start Kata, so don't stop, you learn how to make it part of your daily routine."**

-Leslie Alvarado, Continuous Improvement Manager

## RESULTS



\$1,000,000 in cost savings



\$140,000 in new investment

## CONTACT US



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