

## 70-YEAR-OLD VERMONT COMPANY "REELS" IN EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

**ABOUT CARRIS REELS, INC.** Carris Reels, Inc. was founded in Rutland, Vermont, in 1951. The business' founder and owner, Henry Carris, made it his life's work for over three decades to build the company on a foundation of operational excellence, offering custom solutions for the wire and cable industry. Product lines include wood, metal, plastic and recycled reels. Additionally and offered to customers at no cost, Carris Reels has developed a network of reel return depots and recycling centers where used reels are evaluated, repaired, and reintroduced into the wire and cable manufacturing process.

Having developed into a thriving manufacturing company in the 1980s by implementing start-ups and acquisitions, in addition to extending the company's geographic outreach, Carris Reels, now headquartered in Proctor, VT, operates with 11 manufacturing plants in the U.S., Canada and Mexico combined with 10 assembly/ warehouse locations. Carris Reels became 100% employee-owned in 2008 with over 750 employees nationwide, including 150 working full time in their VT facility.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Having identified employee recruitment and retention as one of their top three strategic challenges over the next three years, Carris knew they needed to find a solution to strengthen supervisor-employee relationships. Having worked with VMEC, part of the MEP National Network™, over the course of many years on lean and kata projects, Carris turned to them for assistance on their workforce challenges.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** VMEC's TWI Job Relations (JR) training was identified as essential in Carris' current and future supervisor-employee relationships; this course, designed to solve people-related problems, provides effective and critical skills for anyone in a leadership role. Four Carris team members, all in supervisory roles, attended VMEC's TWI JR remote training. This 12.5 hour program, presented in five 2.5 hour segments, offers each participant the opportunity to learn and apply the concepts. In addition to case studies, each participant provides a sample problem using the four-step TWI methodology and receives coaching on their demonstration. All participants observe each other's demonstrations. This allows a company to: create an inclusive work environment; build trust and collaboration; have a consistent and coachable methodology; increase the confidence of new and existing supervisors; and strengthen the ability to attract and train employees with no manufacturing experience.

**"Working with VMEC to establish foundational leadership behavior has been critical to our current and future success. Many years of traditional manufacturing supported by traditional leadership has created a successful yet insufficient leadership structure. Carris Reels leadership needs to better understand today's employees as well as learn best practices that will allow our company to grow culturally and profitably. Training with VMEC has been helpful and educational and VMEC staff have been very knowledgeable and supportive. "**

-Tim Traverse, Production Manager

## RESULTS



20 retained jobs



\$500,000 in retained sales



\$60,000 in new investment in workforce practices or employee skills

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