

PERSONALIZED LEAN INSTRUCTION HELPS NEW HARVEST COFFEE ROASTERS IMPROVE PROCESSES FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL MOVE

ABOUT NEW HARVEST. Rik Kleinfeldt and Paula Anderson founded New Harvest Coffee Roasters in 2000 in Providence, Rhode Island. In 2007 the company introduced a sustainable “source direct” program and now has six employees. After two decades in business, New Harvest Coffee Roasters has established itself as a successful roastery with blends for sale throughout New England at Whole Foods Markets and wholesale partners. The company also has a loyal following of fans who enjoy the coffee at an onsite café/retail location in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

THE CHALLENGE. Kleinfeldt was looking to expand capacity, pursue new markets and modernize the business on all fronts. In 2021, the team began preparing for a move from a chopped-up location in Pawtucket to a new dedicated space within the Farm Fresh Food Hub in Providence. Transforming their facility also meant transforming roasting systems, adding new automated equipment and reimagining processes. Even if the company wasn't moving and expanding, leadership still wanted to improve production as the team was struggling to keep up with customer demand.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. New Harvest learned about Polaris MEP, part of the MEP National Network™, from another local food manufacturer, Pat McNiff of Pat's Pastured. McNiff recommended Kleinfeldt work with the MEP Center to eliminate wasteful workflows before the move.

Project Manager Nathan Bonds quickly saw that proven lean manufacturing techniques would be effective. However, just like a good cup of coffee, training should be personalized to each team members' “tastes.” The project involved: group training in lean principles; direct observation of individual production and fulfillment team members, to understand the balance of art and science of their roles; devising and running through a series of iterative lean experiments; and implementing learnings and standardizing new processes for maximum efficiency.

Kleinfeldt told industry publication Daily Coffee News that, “It was an amazing experience for me and the whole staff.” New Harvest enjoyed an increase in capacity of more than 50% and the advance work on processes helped the team get up to speed more quickly after the move. The team also felt more positive about the move, having played a more active role in the transformation.

One unexpected outcome of the lean training was that two employees who were coming in simply to bag/box orders for one wholesale client could be shifted to other jobs. This reduced the number of team members on the floor at any one time, a welcome change during COVID social-distancing. “This was an extremely effective transformation program that enabled us to completely overhaul our processes,” said Kleinfeldt.

“[Lean training] was an amazing experience for me and the whole staff ... This was an extremely effective transformation program that enabled us to completely overhaul our processes.”

-Rik Kleinfeldt, President

RESULTS



4 jobs retained



\$350,000 invested in equipment, plant & systems



\$150,000 in direct cost savings

CONTACT US



315 Iron Horse Way
Providence, RI 02908



(401)270-8896



www.polarismep.org

