

## LIBERTY PUZZLES: WHERE MODERN-DAY MANUFACTURING MEETS ARTISAN TRADITIONS

**ABOUT LIBERTY PUZZLES.** Jeff Eldridge and Christopher Wirth had a dream to begin a small manufacturing company creating high-end, artisan puzzles like the ones popular when their great-grandparents were children. The inspiration behind the business, however, started almost 85 years earlier in the 1920s with a Wirth family matriarch and her love for collecting and completing Falls Puzzles -- ornate wooden puzzles with pieces cut out as intricate character shapes. The Wirth family tells stories of completing these beautiful puzzles on family vacations and documenting the completion in the top of the puzzle box.

With the advent of dye stamp-pressed cardboard puzzles shortly after World War II, the art of whimsical hand-cut wooden jigsaw puzzles was nearly forgotten. That is until this duo of artisans breathed new life into history by fusing modern manufacturing techniques with historical traditions.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Liberty Puzzles was formed in 2005 in a 3,000-sq.-ft. building, growing into adjacent spaces which culminated in 16,000 sq. ft. of production space. After 14 years of robust growth, the company began investigating an expansion into an additional 10,000-sq.-ft. building a few blocks away.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** After meeting with Manufacturer's Edge, part of the MEP National Network™, to assess their specific needs and formulate a roadmap to address everything from facility layout options to communications to processes, the project hit a roadblock with COVID-19. Fortunately, the consultation with Manufacturer's Edge was 80% complete before the pandemic hit, which slowed things down while simultaneously propelling them forward by pushing the company to immediately expand into the 10,000 sq. ft. addition to accommodate social distancing practices.

A short time later, the company was presented with a unique opportunity to develop a third facility, taking over a 53,000 sq. ft. building in Gunbarrel, Colorado. Even though Liberty Puzzles felt great about where they were with their processes and operations, they knew this type of major expansion should not occur without taking a step back and identifying opportunities for wholesale improvement. Manufacturer's Edge was welcomed into the process a second time. This time, the company revisited all of its technologies such as its cutting platforms, compressed air approaches, exhaust systems, and more. Through consultation, they were pleased to find many new efficiencies resulting from technology upgrades. They were also able to hire a full-time process improvement manager.

**"Our best, constant improvement that has come from our relationship with Manufacturer's Edge is with our internal reporting. We have benefited from being able to understand what each of our divisions is producing and how to measure what a real loss rate is and how to weigh that loss rate into the whole. To have real-time status of how the production is working is invaluable."**

-Jeff Eldridge, President & Owner

## RESULTS



59 new or retained jobs



\$1,536,000 in new investment



\$1,395,000 in cost savings



\$1,200,000 in new or retained sales

## CONTACT US



Manufacturer's Edge  
1667 Cole Boulevard, Suite  
400  
Lakewood, CO 80401



(303)592-4087



[www.manufacturersedge.com](http://www.manufacturersedge.com)

