

WMEP ASSISTS SUB-ZERO IN CREATING A SUSTAINABLE METHOD TO TRAIN OPERATIONS LEADERS

ABOUT SUB-ZERO. Launched in 1945, Sub-Zero Freezer Co. introduced the first system for preserving food at ultra-low temperatures. The company quickly established a reputation for quality and innovation. The third-generation, family-owned business, which operates as Sub-Zero Group Inc. based in Madison, Wisconsin, consists of three divisions - Sub-Zero refrigerators and freezers; Wolf Appliance cooking appliances; and Cove brand dishwashing equipment. The company operates a plant in Fitchburg, Wisconsin, and two Arizona facilities in Goodyear and Phoenix. Overall, the company has more than 2,000 employees across the United States.

THE CHALLENGE. Sub-Zero's commitment to being an industry leader in manufacturing and innovation had led them on a journey of continuous improvement, which included elevating the knowledge and skills of their team members. In 2019, Sub-Zero leadership identified the need to create a "Learning Academy" for their employees, which could both support their employees' development needs and provide the necessary skills to facilitate operational improvements.

Sub-Zero's goal was to create a sustainable curriculum and structure to train all their operations leaders (supervisors, engineering managers and quality managers) in lean principles, methodologies, and tools. To support this, Sub-Zero needed a training program that was customized to their specific needs, had the flexibility to work in their busy production environment and provided insight into real world application of the lean tools and methodologies. For help Sub-Zero turned to WMEP, part of the Wisconsin MEP and the MEP National Network™.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. WMEP consultants collaborated with Sub-Zero to establish a multi-year, progressive training plan, which utilized a blended learning approach. The training program had two main elements. One element of the program involved Sub-Zero's employees completing a customized selection of online, self-paced modules for each training topic. The second element of the program was the onsite (and virtual) mentoring sessions provided by the WMEP consultants. During these mentoring sessions, the WMEP Consultants would coach Sub-Zero's team members on the practical application of the lean tools and concepts in their work areas, by reviewing real-world problems and projects with Sub-Zero's team members. Training topics included Principles of Lean, Foundational Lean Tools and Project Management. The training program is on its third year and continues to progress based on the Sub-Zero's business needs. The training program was designed to support successive groups of employees as Sub-Zero's team continues to grow and develop.

"We really like the format and ability to have all three shifts working online at their own pace. Then being able to pull everyone together for a team luncheon to review the application of the materials. This training program has become part of our daily lives and has really led to tangible results that the employees are embracing."

-Brett Pitzner, Fabrication Business Unit Leader II

RESULTS



\$171,000 in operational savings



35% increase in employee efficiency



Established a structure for Lean training which supports employee growth and development



Improved employee morale and engagement in improvement activities



Improved employee retention, resulting in turnover of less than **3%**

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