

## ENHANCING LUMBER PRODUCTION THROUGH IMPROVED TRAINING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

**ABOUT IDAHO FOREST GROUP LLC - COEUR D'ALENE.** From its Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, headquarters, Idaho Forest Group (IFG) is a closely held, family-owned company that is now one of America's largest lumber producers, with a capacity for over one billion board feet per year and markets around the globe. IFG is a growing company, operating 5 sawmills and a finger-joint facility located in North Idaho, and an up-and-coming sawmill in Lumberton, Mississippi, that values employees and holds a reputation for high-quality products.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Several members of IFG's leadership team have collaborated with TechHelp, part of the MEP National Network™, and their office in Northern Idaho over the past 10 years to develop customized solutions to IFG's challenges. This has included working with IFG's director for training and development, corporate controller and numerous mill superintendents. When Idaho Forest Group (IFG) recognized a need to introduce better methods for training new employees and effective tools for developing their future leaders the company turned to TechHelp again.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** TechHelp and IFG leadership developed a comprehensive approach to enabling IFG to meet their current and future challenges. Courses were developed and deployed in mills located in Laclede, Athol, Lewiston, and Grangeville, as well as their corporate headquarters, to train new employees based on the proven "Training Within Industry" methodology. Technical employees were trained on fundamentals of project management as well as Lean Six Sigma tools, to ensure the successful rollout of new methods and equipment. Lean manufacturing training was also implemented into the leadership development program, to enable these concepts to be part of the culture of their future leaders. Whenever possible, these courses were deployed in a "workshop" format where the participants were expected to bring their current challenges to the class and work on solutions as part of the course. These classes were also typically split into shorter time frames which allowed the students to work on implementing changes between class sessions and report back on their results.

"TechHelp is an integral partner for Idaho Forest Group's talent development and continuous improvement strategies. Preparing on-the-floor trainers to deliver standardized job-specific training enables new employees to learn tasks and build confidence faster, which helps improve retention. The project management resources shared by TechHelp have enabled our supervisors to plan, organize, and deliver on improvement initiatives, which impacts key performance indicators."

-Marie Price, Director for Training & Development

## RESULTS



Invested over **\$25,000** in employee training over the past 2 years



The learning curve for new employees and those in new positions were dramatically reduced



The ability to track employee skills for development and succession planning greatly improved



Reduced production requirements communication errors, increased process uptime, & improved quality

## CONTACT US



Boise State University  
1910 University Drive  
Boise, ID 83725-1656



(208)426-3767



[www.techhelp.org](http://www.techhelp.org)

**TECHHELP**  
Idaho Manufacturing Specialists