

## CREATING A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TEAM AT BOB'S RED MILL

**ABOUT BOB'S RED MILL, INC.** Bob's Red Mill was founded in 1978 to provide wholesome stone-ground flour and grain to local markets. In 2010, after years of successful growth, ownership of the company was transferred to its employees through an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP). Bob's Red Mill currently employs over 600 staff with four production shifts at the Milwaukie, Oregon, facility.

**THE CHALLENGE.** OMEP, part of the MEP National Network™, was invited to help the continuous improvement team build an effective training and development process so that they could grow the entire organization's capacity for ongoing operational excellence. Bill Lozier, chief operating officer, stated, "We wanted a structured approach to getting better on the shop floor. We wanted to know how to measure ourselves. How do we learn from our mistakes and make improvements? We didn't have a clear structure to do this."

A major goal of the operations group was to increase the efficiency of large equipment installation projects, with a primary focus on reducing the time required to install and commission product packaging lines. Additionally, because Bob's Red Mill is an employee-owned company, they wished to empower all employees in the organization to improve their strategic thinking and problem-solving abilities. They desired all staff to be working toward the same production key performance indicators (KPIs) to better measure the effectiveness of operations. Ultimately, Bob's Red Mill wanted to help production personnel gain more ownership in how their areas function.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** OMEP's on-site consultants adopted a blended continuous improvement approach with Bob's Red Mill, focusing on problem solving, capacity creation and culture building. To do this, OMEP worked closely with the operations leadership team to identify which processes to focus on. Safety, in general, was selected as the vehicle for problem-solving training. It was accessible and relatable to everyone in the plant and didn't require any of the staff to have special technical knowledge to be able to participate meaningfully. The new equipment installation process was also selected as a target area to teach project management and build additional production capacity quickly. Increasing capacity was a priority for the organization. In each case, OMEP created customized training for the Bob's Red Mill team and then used real-world events and projects to practice the new skills.

"By working with OMEP, our workforce, from the floor staff on up, discovered a new way of operating and thinking. We can apply this to any project or program. We originally can to OMEP to learn about increasing machine productivity, but we have instead created an entirely new, more effective method of working."

-Bill Lozier, Chief Operating Officer

## RESULTS



20% reduction in installation time for new equipment



5% packing line productivity improvement



Balanced workload for engineering staff through improved recruiting, hiring and training

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