

CHOCOLATE LOVERS, REJOICE! BIRNN CHOCOLATES WEATHERS THE PANDEMIC IMPLEMENTING PROBLEM SOLVING TECHNIQUES

ABOUT BIRNN CHOCOLATES OF VERMONT INC. A small chocolate maker began his confection journey in 1915 in Brooklyn, New York, and central New Jersey. After growing substantially in the 1950s and 1960s throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the company moved to Vermont in 1991 and changed its name to Birnn Chocolates of Vermont Inc. Located in South Burlington, Vermont, this fourth-generation family and woman-owned business employs 30 full-time staff. As a supplier of handmade chocolate truffles, Birnn lives and works by their motto: "We Make Truffles For People Who Sell Truffles To People Who Love Truffles."

THE CHALLENGE. In light of the challenges Vermont food manufacturers were undergoing at the start of the COVID pandemic, through funding from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (AFM), VMEC, part of the MEP National Network™, offered a 3-session, virtual course in the summer of 2020 for VT's small food and beverage manufacturers to help them navigate their position in the marketplace and set them up for future success. The deeply-discounted course focused on the identification of existing barriers, providing instruction to apply continuous improvement and problem-solving fundamentals to address those barriers, using examples and applications that related to their challenges. Birnn Chocolates registered two persons from their company to attend this course.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. This program was designed to provide the participants, through a series of workshops, small group coaching, and individual assignments, with repeatable tools they could use beyond the class to continually improve their operations in a changing environment. Coaching segments provided practical application to problems that businesses were addressing. Upon completion of the course attendees had increased their skills and confidence in understanding problem solving and how to navigate the ever-changing and challenging pandemic as it related to their business environment.

"VMEC has been an incredible resource for us as food manufacturers in Vermont. They are accessible, eager to help, and offer a wealth of knowledge and experience. We are grateful to live in a community where VMEC can exist and help businesses like ourselves thrive."

-Julia Birnn Fields, Owner

RESULTS



3 jobs created, 15 jobs retained



\$50,000 in cost savings



\$10,000 in new sales, \$10,000 in retained sales

CONTACT US



VTC, 124 Admin Drive
Old Dorm, Suite 126
Randolph Center, VT 05061



(802)728-1432



www.vmec.org

