

NEW OWNERS PUT SILVER CITY TILE COMPANY ON PATH TO GROWTH

ABOUT SYZYGY INC. Within two years of purchasing Syzygy Tile Works in Silver City, New Mexico, Josh and Carolyn White knew they needed to expand the business to meet demand for their high-end, handcrafted ceramic tiles. The 30-year-old business, where Josh worked for 16 years before the previous owner retired, employs 20 full-time and 7 part-time workers who manufacture and ship tile to U.S. and overseas markets from its facility at 106 N. Bullard Street in the historic heart of Silver City. The company's ability to customize tile designs and glaze colors sets them apart from high-volume, low-mix competitors. Artisan employees need as much as three years to fully learn the craft that enables the company to produce the artistic, environmentally sound products the company is known for.

THE CHALLENGE. Customers waited four to five months for product delivery - an unsustainable interval for a growing business. The New Mexico Economic Development Department introduced the Whites to New Mexico MEP, part of the MEP National Network™, which engaged the company's entire staff to analyze all production elements and identify wasteful steps and bottlenecks that could be eliminated. The White's goal was to reduce delivery times to a maximum of two months and to triple capacity.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. New Mexico MEP Innovation Director Jeff Abrams helped staff analyze which production steps needed to be performed by highly skilled artisans and which could be accomplished by other means. New Mexico MEP Automation Specialist Wesley Eccles brought a computer-controlled robot to the facility, calibrated it for the glazing operation, and for three days tested its ability to speed up production. Abrams also worked with employees to analyze operations data, including employing time studies, to determine actual costs per square foot of different tile types. The current facility was evaluated for expansion potential that would increase production capacity.

"I felt relief that it was not just on my wife's shoulders and mine to help solve problems while also trying to run the business. It helped us feel confident to take risks. The results were beyond our expectations."

-Josh White, Co-owner

RESULTS



Output is projected to increase by **80%** as the robot fully comes online and relieves this bottleneck



Immediate production improvements cut waste by **30%**, increased output by **20%**.

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