

INVESTING IN LEAN TRAINING DURING PANDEMIC PAYS DIVIDENDS FOR WOOD STONE CORPORATION

ABOUT WOOD STONE CORPORATION. Based in Bellingham, Washington, Wood Stone Corporation is a leading manufacturer of high-quality commercial cooking equipment, including stone hearth ovens, rotisseries, charcoal grills, and more. With a commitment to innovation, sustainability, and customer service, Wood Stone has provided exceptional products and services to the food service industry for over 30 years. Wood Stone's equipment is used by top chefs and operators in restaurants, hotels, offices, school campuses, and other food service establishments in the US and worldwide.

THE CHALLENGE. In June 2020, Impact Washington, part of the MEP National Network™, was introduced to newly-hired VP of Engineering and Operations Fred Gapasin. After Fred reviewed his operational needs, he reengaged with proposed projects introduced by Impact Washington and the Center's partner, Whatcom Community College, that had previously been put on hold.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Utilizing Washington's incumbent worker program, Impact Washington partnered with Whatcom Community College and provided key employees with Lean Enterprise Certification Program (LECP) training. Lean Enterprise Certification is a program created by the Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME). It provides lean training and experience to those who participate to become "lean champions" for their companies. Washington's Job Skills Program is a wage-match program that helped Wood Stone Corporation offset the cost of providing LECP training to their staff and meeting their needs.

Impact Washington employee and Continuous Improvement Specialist Sarah Stuart delivered the LECP training remotely. Wood Stone employees acquired the skills that allowed them to successfully facilitate improvements on their own. This training started a foundation of continuous improvement efforts. It allowed them to identify Wood Stone's value streams and their KPIs and implemented visual factory tools to provide more comprehensive KPI visibility. They converted from batch to one-piece flow to meet increased demand from a significant customer, and improved output >200% in three months with no added factory resources. They incorporated increased concurrent engineering in the development of a new Wood Stone product launching in 2023.

"After a few attempts at implementing a continuous improvement journey, we determined it was necessary to begin again. This time we concentrated first on building the skill set of our team. We engaged Impact Washington to provide continuous improvement overview and lean champion training. Both pieces of training have allowed us to embed the concepts of continuous improvement into the muscle memory of Wood Stone. We were further behind because we had yet to do this type of training. It has and continues to be a part of our supportive culture, one of four key sections of our Operational Maturity Roadmap that set the stage for where we need to go."

-Fred Gapasin, VP Engineering and Operations

RESULTS



Improved average customer on-time delivery performance from **60%** to 90%



Employees share a common language around continuous improvement.



Incorporated increased concurrent engineering in the development of a new product.



Implemented **44** "muda" reduction teams that covered eight waste categories.



Improved output >200% in **3** months with no added factory resources.

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