

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES FOR FOOD PROCESSING LINE

ABOUT INNOVATION FOOD SERVICE. In 2002, founder Thomas Lane established Red's Catering in Twinsburg, Ohio, supplying healthy, homemade meals and snacks to local daycare centers. They quickly discovered that the market was calling for fresh, homemade options for students of all ages. In 2008, the business expanded to Innovation Food Services (IFS) that broadened the reach into school districts, summer meal programs, senior centers, and daycare centers. COVID redefined how to do business, and to ensure the food security needs were met for students across Northeast Ohio, IFS launched On-Call Meal Solutions - the direct ship method developed to close the gap, provide a sense of dignity, and meet the need of food insecurity.

THE CHALLENGE. The team at IFS provides fresh, nutritious foods packed daily and served the next day. With the introduction of IFS's lunch menu to local schools in the Cleveland area, the food processing line saw tremendous growth. The last step of the process is packing out the food trays into transferrable, returnable totes. However, this became a bottleneck and resulted in scrap because if the tray of food was dropped, it was discarded. IFS looked to MAGNET, part of the Ohio MEP and the MEP National Network™, for assistance in ways to reduce scrap and improve efficiencies on the line.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. MAGNET utilized a two-phased approach for this project. First, the Center focused on line balance, calculating the line's Takt time (production time available divided by customer demand) and finding the proper flow. As a metric, it represents the amount of time "budgeted" to manufacture each part.

MAGNET also worked with a cobot provider to install, test, and fine tune a cobot or "collaborative robot" within the new manufacturing process. The cobot was able to transfer the food trays from the line to the tote without issue, working seamlessly with the production line and remaining balanced to Takt time for the line.

"Truly, I cannot begin to describe the impact MAGNET has had on our meal manufacturing business. From the high-level guidance of Bass and his team, to the resources they bring to the table, their simple presence makes us a better organization. And it does not stop there. The operational level at which Jim Friedl and his expertise was able to advance our packaging line, assembly areas, and logistics was transformative. In one fell swoop he was able to increase our efficiency in several key areas while simultaneously improving the job satisfaction of our team members, creating a massive win for everyone. Now, as we begin the next phases of our growth, our relationship with MAGNET will only deepen."

-Thomas Lane, President / Founder

RESULTS



\$4,000,000 in new sales;
\$3,500,000 in retained sales



\$65,000 invested in plant and equipment



\$60,000 in cost savings

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