

## HEARTHSTONE WARMS UP TO AND EMBRACES GROWTH IMPROVEMENT AND WORKFORCE UPSKILLING

**ABOUT HEARTHSTONE.** Hearthstone, a recognized leading manufacturer of wood, pellet, and gas home heating stoves, is committed to providing heating solutions which are renewable, carbon neutral and clean. Located in Morrisville, Vermont, the 43-year-old company employs 60 full time workers, many who are Vermont craftsmen who are committed to building quality stoves, handcrafting each Hearthstone to meet the highest standards using the finest materials and the most advanced heating technology. Every Hearthstone soapstone stove is signed by the stove builder. The company provides service through their extensive network of over 600 authorized dealers in the United States, Canada and Japan.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Having doubled their sales the previous year, Hearthstone knew they needed to upskill their staff to be able to meet the demand with the current staffing levels. Having worked with VMEC, part of the MEP National Network™, for many years on lean-based efforts, Hearthstone reached out to VMEC for their support in their growth efforts.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** Working with the Hearthstone production staff, VMEC proposed a months-long program that offered base level learning, consisting of Lean 101 training, followed by an application learning of 5S visual organization for a smaller team and concluding with multi-week coaching cycles in order to sustain the learning and its improvements. Workshops were developed to support continuous improvement and growth initiatives by giving management, supervisory and operating personnel exposure to a common body of knowledge. The application mode integrates “real world” examples into the training. Participants moved from demonstration to utilization to enhance each person’s learning. During this process, specific technical or business content was identified for further training needs. At the project’s conclusion, VMEC facilitated the application of principles to key personnel to support continued growth using the PDCA cycle of problem solving and process improvement by providing a mix of training, implementation assistance, and ongoing coaching creating internal competence.

**"VMEC provided our entire staff with a very detail oriented, easy to follow, training program to help us improve some of our inefficiencies in our production and warehouse processes. This entire process was very well organized and tailored to fit what we do here at Hearthstone. We have installed and sustained many 5S and lean practices from the training that provided instant improved results. We have worked with VMEC and their team on many occasions and each time we successfully improve in the target areas we were aiming for."**

-Dale Ward, Supply Chain Manager

## RESULTS



40 retained jobs



\$2,500,000 in retained sales



\$500,000 in new investment in plant and equipment



\$300,000 in cost savings



\$75,000 in new investment in workforce practices or employee skills

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