

## NOT JUST FOR THE SHOP FLOOR - LEAN TOOLS HELP MANUFACTURER IDENTIFY FRONT OFFICE EFFICIENCIES

**ABOUT LITTLE HARBOR WINDOW COMPANY INC.** Little Harbor Window Company is a family-owned manufacturer of premier windows and doors, located in Berwick, Maine. The business was established in 1983 and currently employs 32 people in their state-of-the-art facility. Little Harbor Window Company offers the discerning architect, builder, and homeowner the ability to truly custom design their windows and doors to perfectly fit the requirements of the building. The company was awarded the 2016 Maine Wood Products Association Pine Tree Award for Tremendous Growth and Innovation in the Wood Products Industry and voted 2003 SBA Small Business of the Year for Maine.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Little Harbor Window Company is approaching a transition of leadership to the next generation in the family. In addition to this, three other members of the leadership team will retire within the next two years. Little Harbor Windows recognized that although they have done a great job with using lean tools to drive improvements in production, that they had significant opportunity for improvements with front office processes and workforce organization and design. There was an awareness that their staff lacked the expertise to strengthen the front office processes, which is why they reached out to Maine MEP, part of the MEP National Network™.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** Maine MEP facilitated a multi-day Kaizen, focused on workforce organization and design. Using the tools from Lean Office, Maine MEP helped Little Harbor Window Company to identify developmental and transactional waste in their front office, most of which were a result of a lack of definition of responsibilities and team structure. Maine MEP Project Manager Jim Fay and the Little Harbor Window team identified current state, and developed a plan to move to an improved future state. Each trainee participated in an overview of the kaizen model, developing and implementing countermeasures to move to an improved future state. These countermeasures included the creation of a company organizational chart, accountability matrices, job descriptions, and a process for holding weekly team huddles.

"As a manufacturing company much of our attention is spent updating and improving systems to insure production flow is as efficient as possible. We noticed that many of our office systems were not operating as efficiently as they could. We also noticed that communication between departments was beginning to suffer. This work that we did with the MEP brought all of the office departments together as well as department managers from the production floor. Through a series of brainstorming sessions, we put together a current state and future state and then began implementing the ideas. The energy was incredible and we were able to make immediate strides toward pulling the departments back together and improving communication and reducing redundant processes. We are now meeting on a regular basis(again) and have streamlined many systems. We are also able to create Kaizens to implement ideas and make changes."

-James (Jim) Eaton, President

## RESULTS



3 jobs retained



\$350,000 in new or retained sales due to improved communication and front-end office processes



\$55,000 invested in new processes and employee skills



\$35,000 in cost avoidance/savings

## CONTACT US



87 Winthrop Street  
Augusta, ME 04330-5554



(207)623-0680



[www.mainemep.org](http://www.mainemep.org)

MAINEMEP 