

NORTHLAND TRUSS SYSTEMS BUSINESS EXCELLENCE OPTIMIZATION TOOL LEADS TO IMPROVED CULTURE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

ABOUT NORTHLAND TRUSS SYSTEMS, INC. Northland Truss Systems, Inc., provides commercial, residential and agricultural structural wood components including truss to truss connections, posts, and engineered wood products. Their production facility is in Abercrombie, North Dakota, and their sales office is in Fargo. Their mission is, “to exceed customer expectations in pride, quality, reliability, service, and creativity.” Northland is currently one of the largest truss manufacturers in the area. They supply trusses for projects from Grand Forks, ND, to Watertown, SD, and from Bismarck, ND, to Minneapolis, MN, on a regular basis.

THE CHALLENGE. Impact Dakota, part of the MEP National Network™, has done the business excellence optimization two times with Northland Truss. The first time doing the assessment, there were some significant communication issues and the company had a turn over problem with employees. Northland Truss was consistently looking for 10 or more people to fill their roster and running shifts, light on employees on a regular basis. The team also had some other communication road blocks and are still working on some of these for communication between the two sites.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. After completing the business excellence assessment and report out session where many of these issues came to light, Northland Truss implemented huddle boards with their production staff to facilitate communication.

They implemented a rewards and recognition program, sponsor company events outside the office (Redhawks and Force games, Red River Valley Speedway), added and improved benefits (health insurance, counseling services, paid holidays). They also increased pay scale to attract employees from outside their rural location and run a shuttle bus to Fargo to pick up and return employees the 20+ miles to the Abercrombie site.

They focused on communication of important duties and prioritized with the employees their roles, and through better communication, attracted new employees and retained current employees to be at full employment when Impact Dakota did the second business excellence assessment earlier this year.

The communications improvement lead to the Impact Dakota team noticing a marked improvement in the culture and level of engagement of the whole team during the second business excellence assessment. Northland Truss also sent several members of their team to LEAN 101 training in Fargo to learn about how to improve their production processes. Northland Truss is also implementing a significant plant expansion and purchasing new equipment for that expansion.

RESULTS



Increased employee base by at least **10** employees



Retained employees at a level to keep full employment



Plant expansion of **\$5,000,000** over next 5 to 7 years



Significant improvement in culture



Investment in employees with Lean **101** training for the team

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"Impact Dakota helped us see the areas we needed to improve and sparked ideas for making those improvements. Still a work in progress but definitely on the right track now."

-Christopher M. Lange, President