

CUMULATIVE IMPACT INDICATES SIGNIFICANT GROWTH AND OUTCOMES FOR LAWRENCE BROTHERS, INC.

ABOUT LAWRENCE BROS., INC. Lawrence Brothers, a heavy metal fabricator in the Southwest Virginia town of Bluefield, specializes in mine battery trays. With modest beginnings in a 3-car garage in 1974, Lawrence Brothers, Inc., has grown into one of the largest companies in Tazewell County, with more than 80 employees occupying an 80,000-square-foot facility.

THE CHALLENGE. To propel forward their diversification strategy and stay abreast of automation trends, while also increasing production and improving efficiency, the manufacturer turned to GENEDGE, part of the MEP National Network™, for help.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. GENEDGE consultants worked alongside employees in value stream mapping and manufacturing process improvement projects, as well as a lean manufacturing class in November 2022. The exercises were revealing.

"When you do something every day, you get used to the process," said Brandon McCracken, Lawrence Brothers' COO. "As we dove deeper into our processes, it opened my eyes as to what we could improve or eliminate. It gave us a clearer picture of what we needed to do to be more productive." Lawrence Brothers continued working with GENEDGE to analyze the company's overall manufacturing process and create a roadmap for automation and continued process improvement to further drive diversification. Through the GENEDGE-guided process of value-stream mapping, LBI quickly identified and implemented process improvements resulting in nearly 40% more efficiency. These process improvements did not require capital investment, and the time and money saved enabled LBI to fund research and development in automation exploration and on-site apprenticeship programs. LBI is now 35% more efficient on the production floor. In addition, the company has been able to reduce overtime from 15% per pay period to 7%, allowing the net income to increase. With additional profit in-hand, LBI plans to implement automation alongside manual labor in two of their production processes. The efficiency gained during the various GENEDGE-led projects has also allowed LBI to invest resources into an on-site paid apprenticeship program to upskill both the incoming workforce, as well as their existing employees, in higher-skilled and more competitively compensated career paths such as automation programming, maintenance and operation.

"At Lawrence Brothers, Inc., we love a good challenge! While workforce constraints may be frustrating, I feel confident that through collaborative regional partnerships like those with other local manufacturers and facilitators like GENEDGE, the future is bright not only for LBI, but for broader SWVA. We are now well-equipped to identify our challenges, troubleshoot solutions, and operate well 'outside of the box' to find and implement innovative solutions that help us attain our goals."

-Melanie Protti-Lawrence, President

RESULTS



45 created or retained jobs



\$6,000,000 in new or retained sales



\$2,575,000 in new investment



\$750,000 in cost savings

CONTACT US



32 Bridge Street S, Suite 200
Martinsville, VA 24112-6216



(276)666-8890 x221



www.genedge.org

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