

TOYOTA KATA METHODOLOGY HELPED TRANSFORM THE XPRESS BOATS TEAM

ABOUT XPRESS BOATS. Family-owned and -operated Xpress Boats has been building quality aluminum boats in Arkansas since 1966. Starting out in a little schoolhouse in Friendship, Arkansas, Xpress Boats built the first all-welded, all-aluminum boat. Xpress Boats discovered an untapped market in the boating industry and began to make a name for itself.

THE CHALLENGE. Xpress Boats, located in Hot Springs, Arkansas, could not keep up with the demand for their boats even before COVID. Dealers from around the country have been on a restricted allocation for several years and when the COVID epidemic did hit, the demand for their boats surged. This demand has been consistent and has continued to increase yearly. The company turned to AMS, part of the MEP National Network™, for help.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. AMS helped support the Xpress Boats organization with the application of knowledge and skill building routines, beginning with designating Leader Starter Kata participants (who develop into members of an advance group/steering team). Leadership used strategic planning and value stream mapping, direction setting tools, to create and, ultimately, reach their future state goals. The individual teams associated with the kata challenges then did the work of striving for those strategic challenges, up to the formation and development of a kata advance group, which leads and guides daily practice routines.

AMS staff have found that training within industry (TWI) methodology couples well with the kata advance group for sustainment. Through use of these tools the Xpress Boats team has, thus far, created 3 assembly lines that now use the pull system approach to ensure FIFO methodology (first in, first out). The scheduling process has also been revamped to ensure that they have a daily mix of the different model boats to ensure that the customer demands are met.

"The biggest success I've witnessed is the change of mindset on solving real issues from the floor up to management. The overall engagement and excitement of our employees, primarily our value adders, had led to an improvement in safety, increased production, and better morale. The KATA mindset shows us that our value adders are our experts, helping get the real issues solved.

"

-Skip McAlister, Plant Manager

RESULTS



220 new or retained jobs



\$3,500,000 in new or retained sales



\$1,100,000 in cost savings



\$520,000 in new investment

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