

DICKSON TURNS TO CIRAS FOR AUTOMATION SUPPORT

ABOUT DICKSON INDUSTRIES INC. Dickson Industries is a Des Moines-based family-owned company specializing in custom food packaging and textiles. Since 1946, Dickson Industries has provided top-quality products and services to a multitude of national and international businesses.

THE CHALLENGE. Dickson had the potential to increase its sales. However, like other Iowa businesses, it grappled with a challenging workforce environment that posed difficulties for its expansion. Dickson turned to CIRAS, part of the MEP National Network™, for help.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. CIRAS evaluated the process in question—creating the fabric casing commonly used for turkeys, hams, and other meats. Dickson had several stations that processed and cut the netting, and they weren't able to hire enough workers to keep up with orders. They worked with CIRAS to study the current process, determine desired changes, develop specifications for needed automation, and connect Dickson with potential system integrators to provide the automated system.

CIRAS was able to come in with fresh eyes and the expertise needed to analyze the tasks that needed to be automated. That included documenting how workers took an extra step to wipe off accumulated liquid after each netting cut and how the netting cuts needed to vary in size.

CIRAS helped Dickson vet vendors and estimate equipment, pricing, and the impact on the company's immediate business and long-term goals. The project included automating the fabric cutting and movement through the process with numerous sensors to help manage the process. These changes will allow the current operator to manage multiple systems.

"We were looking at automation of some tasks, not because we wanted to replace workers but because we wanted to supplement what they were doing."

-David Dickson, President

RESULTS



8 jobs retained



\$1,200,000 in total financial impact, including investment, cost savings, and more.

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