

LEAN INVENTORY TRAINING HELPS GLASSWORKS STUDIO REDUCE MESS AND STRESS, INCREASE SUCCESS

ABOUT TRACY GLOVER STUDIO. In 2004, artist Tracy Glover found that she was so busy with her “on the side” glassworks design and production, she quit her day job and founded her own studio. Pawtucket-based Tracy Glover Studio has since grown in size - 8 employees and a 5,000 square foot space - and reputation. It’s now a favorite source for exquisite, hand-blown, customizable decorative lighting fixtures.

THE CHALLENGE. By 2021 the business was growing fast - almost 75% quarter-over-quarter - but the team was inefficient. The designer didn’t feel like she could fix it on her own. “I knew there was a lot I didn’t know. We all had ideas [on how to improve efficiency] but had to have an outside person facilitate it, help us pick the right approach and implement it.”

Glover was enrolled in the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses - Rhode Island program. After hearing several glowing testimonials about Polaris MEP, part of the MEP National Network™, from current and past participants, she reached out to the state’s MEP Center.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. The first project the team undertook was visual identification of inventory, coupled with lean principles that helped all employees learn how to maximize flow of value-added processes. After the “Learn-Do” LEAN training, the metal shop lead took greater ownership of that area. He organizes and re-organizes on his own, constantly refining his space and improving his workflow according to the principles, said Glover.






Polaris MEP Project Manager Ted Kennedy then built on that momentum, coaching Glover’s staff as they tackled the glass blowing and packaging areas. Funding from Rhode Island Department of Labor’s Real Jobs RI made the project an even greater value.

With the help of Polaris MEP, Tracy Glover Studio reduced the mess and their stress. Productivity improved as the team no longer spends hours searching for materials or parts. The new inventory system brought confidence when Glover continued to grow. It played into her decision to hire two new creatives - “You don’t want to bring on more people if you’re feeling adrift.” Glover praised Kennedy as a “gentle teacher that worked well with our vibe.” She went on to work with Kennedy and Polaris MEP on two more projects and continues to look for ways to leverage the MEP Center to reach her goals.

“It’s paid off. Customers are happier, our lead times went down, there are fewer mistakes. Everything improved for everybody, after we worked with Polaris MEP [on inventory and process flow].”

-Tracy Glover, President

RESULTS

-  2 jobs created, 2 jobs retained
-  \$250,000 in new sales, \$275,000 retained
-  \$257,000 in both direct cost savings and by avoiding unnecessary investments
-  Investments of \$47,500 in plant, equipment and information systems
-  Investment of \$30,000 in new products and processes

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