

## LEAN 101 AND THE TOP 10 LEAN TOOLS REINVIGORATES THE CUSTOM GRAPHICS TEAM ON THEIR LEAN JOURNEY

**ABOUT CUSTOM GRAPHICS.** On January 15th, 1982 Custom Graphics, Inc. opened its doors for business on 912 Page Drive with 5 eager employees. Co-founders Paul Paxton and Jeff Estes worked together with their team to innovate and create top of the line screen printed parts for growing agriculture manufacturers.

Over time, Custom Graphics expanded to occupy the entire building at 2501 3rd Avenue North, 28,000 square feet of manufacturing space, and on top of that, built a massive installation bay which added 3,600 square feet to the building. After the untimely passing of beloved Paul Paxton in 2016, general manager Zach Paxton took over the family business. Since that time, Custom Graphics has taken great strides towards becoming a large-scale digital printing operation, maintaining success in the screen printing manufacturing industry and increasing the types of signage we create, install and service. After 41 years in business, Custom Graphics, Inc., serves a large and growing customer base, ships products all over the world, and employs more than 50 people in Fargo, North Dakota.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Impact Dakota, part of the MEP National Network™, connected with Zach at an event in Fargo. During their conversation, he mentioned that they were interested in lean. Zach and his team had already decided that 2023 was the year of education and what a better way to start by taking classes about lean.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** Six employees participated in a Lean 101 training, attending two different sessions held in Valley City and Fargo. The Top 10 Lean Tools sparked their desire to review their factory for wastes and reinvigorate their lean journey.

The six employees newly trained in the Top 10 Lean Tools grabbed ahold of area layout and flow; 5S; point of use (POU) equipment; and tools and E&O (excess and obsolete) materials. They prioritized the custom cutting area, which was implemented in recent years due to availability of ordering custom cut stock. This area now orders large standard cuts of stock and then custom cuts pieces into sizes via manual and machine cutting.

While reviewing the flow and layout, the team observed that the automated and manual cutting machines were not POU, or in flow order, which prompted the team to relocate these pieces of equipment into the work cell flow, saving wasted motion of employees and transportation of parts. They also noticed the 5S and E&O items in the area which led to reducing the amount of inventory materials kept near the area resulting in workplace organization, room to locate the cutting machines into the area and a more streamlined easy to visualize cutting process.

"I would like to share my appreciation to Impact Dakota for bringing excitement into our work environment. The lean tools that they have shared have started to influence and change the way we think about doing our jobs."

-Russell Larson, Operations Manager

## RESULTS



130 hours of travel time saved for operator



\$4,550 per year in cost savings

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