

## LEAN TRANSFORMS THE OPERATION

**ABOUT TOMAHAWK LIVE TRAP, LLC.** Tomahawk Live Trap (TLT) was founded in 1925 by a mink farmer in Hazelhurst, Wisconsin. When the Mink fur business began to slow, the company began producing live traps for small animals. Greg Smith's father bought the company from the original owner, and in 2012 Greg Smith became the second-generation owner.

**THE CHALLENGE.** TLT was initially focused on the mink fur business before transitioning to producing live traps for small animals. Greg Smith became the second-generation owner in 2012, and the business was stagnant, and the atmosphere was described as conflicting and demanding. TLT turned to MOC, part of the Wisconsin MEP and the MEP National Network™, for help.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** MOC identified many inefficiencies in TLT's processes and, although initially skeptical, TLT leadership was convinced of the potential benefits of lean implementation after seeing the success of other businesses that had worked with the MOC. Aiming to improve efficiency and reduce errors through lean manufacturing training and process adjustments, MOC put teams together to build a plan and initiate the improvement work.

TLT has undergone significant changes since the involvement of the MOC. Through the development and implementation of lean manufacturing principles, including single-piece flow and working with smaller batches, TLT was able to see significant improvements in operational efficiency and sales growth. In addition, despite damage to a building in a snowstorm, posing a serious threat to their operations, TLT managed to resume shipping within days, thanks to lean manufacturing principles like "single piece flow" and "just in time" inventory, which allowed them to maintain efficient production and meet demand.

"Our partnership with the MOC is the single biggest reason for our growth. The concepts we learned from them have enabled us to not only be more competitive, but to be the leading manufacturer in our industry. And without the lean manufacturing concepts we learned from them, it's very likely the warehouse collapse would have set us back years or even put us out of business."

-Greg Smith, Owner

## RESULTS



25 jobs created



**\$350,000+** investment in equipment such as welders, wire cutters, CNC wire forming, and a box maker



New investment in 12,000-square-foot shipping warehouse



**23%** sales increase the year following the reintroduction of lean practices

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