

LEAN TRAINING HELPS DAIRY MAKE TRANSFORMATIONAL
COST-SAVING “MOOOOOVES”

ABOUT WRIGHT'S DAIRY FARM. Rhode Islanders have been enjoying products from Wright's Dairy Farm and Bakery since the early 1900s. At first the farm focused on bottling milk; today, the Wright's business includes 105 cows, a state-of-the-art milking barn, a bakery and a retail store at the farm, plus a Providence “cow-to-cone” ice cream shop.

THE CHALLENGE. Cathryn “Cate” Kennedy joined the family business in 2015 as dairy manager. As Kennedy began leveling up as a manager and focusing on innovations, she needed her team to also level up. Wright's needed to develop a culture of problem-solving, efficiency and continuous improvement. High praise for Polaris MEP, part of the MEP National Network™, from two other food businesses led Kennedy to call the center and pursue lean manufacturing training.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. The first project Polaris MEP's Nathan Bonds launched with the Wright's team was a value stream mapping and kaizen effort for the dairy packaging function. Gaps between the current process and the ideal “future state” were identified. Bonds actively led the team in learn-do training to make needed changes. Bonds, says Kennedy, got Wright's focused on getting “one percent better every day. Learn from what you did, make little improvements and move forward, and eventually, you'll see some big changes.”

A new culture developed through a variety of projects over several years. Guided by Bonds, front line staff used lean tools to improve the flow in the bakery, the ordering system and more; the management team came together and applied lean 5S to the organization of a new-but-inefficient storage facility. Kennedy says lean practices have led to significant savings. She called the storage facility 5S “a huge win.”

“In looking at where things should be going and how should we be storing them, it really brought up the issue of material handling. The weakness was that we didn't have a forklift,” which meant items were put where a skid loader could put them, not where they belonged. Wright's bought a forklift and cross-trained several staffers. “It made a world of difference to just put things where they need to be and minimize how many times we need to touch things and rework,” said Kennedy.

A lean-driven pull system for bakery components was another transformation. “It's helped us to be able to manage a lot of little components that would have fallen through the cracks. And it's a system that's super easy and user-friendly for the staff on the floor.” Kennedy praises Bonds as a true partner. “What's exciting is that a lot of what we talked about when Nathan first started with us as future state for the dairy we've actually finally finished.”

“Polaris MEP [lean training] provided a really good lens to make sure that we're not compromising on quality or something that the customer really cares for, but really trying to simplify everything that we do. ”

-Cathryn Kennedy, Dairy Manager

RESULTS



2 new jobs; 6 employee positions retained



New sales of \$80,000; retained sales of **\$50,000**



\$99,000 in both direct savings and by avoiding unnecessary investments



\$70,000 in plant, equipment and information systems



\$18,000 invested in new products and processes

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