

MANUFACTURER CONNECTS WITH IMEC TO HELP DEVELOP A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

ABOUT CAROLINA BRANDS DBA RUTLAND. Founded in 1883 in Jacksonville, IL, Rutland, with 24 employees, became a leading manufacturer of products for fireplace, chimney, and stove maintenance.

THE CHALLENGE. Founded in 1883, Rutland became a leading manufacturer of products for fireplace, chimney, and stove maintenance. Over the past 140+ years, Rutland has grown from a small family-owned business in Rutland, Vermont, into an industry-leading manufacturer. Its headquarters and manufacturing facilities are in Jacksonville, Illinois. Rutland products are available nationwide at leading retailers, including Ace Hardware, Amazon, Home Depot, and Tractor Supply Company, as well as at locally owned stove, grill, and hearth stores.

Rutland is a small manufacturer that had no formal continuous improvement processes. The company identified an opportunity to provide Six Sigma Green Belt training for key team members to foster a culture of continuous improvement. The company wanted to upgrade participants' skill sets so they could identify production waste, reduce unnecessary product costs, and improve profitability. The ultimate goal was to develop a strong team of continuous improvement leaders. Rutland would benefit from these leaders' new skills by remaining competitive, retaining employees, and growing its business.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Recognizing the need for a structured approach to continuous improvement, Rutland contacted IMEC to provide specialized Six Sigma Green Belt training. This training, which uses the DMAIC (Define-Measure-Analyze-Improve-Control) problem-solving process, delivers significant cost savings by reducing waste and improving processes and productivity.

The IMEC team quickly got to work and coordinated a nine-day schedule using a train-and-do approach. Participants learned skills and then applied them to real problems they were experiencing in the facility. Laura Lee Rose, a Six Sigma expert who previously worked with both IMEC and Missouri Enterprise, provided instruction and mentoring for all the Rutland participants. The Six Sigma Green Belt Training significantly benefited Rutland by improving manufacturing processes and identifying cost-saving opportunities.

The training led to:

- Enhanced operational efficiency
- Identification and elimination of unprofitable products
- Potential cost savings through improved material sourcing
- Overall improvement in profitability and competitiveness

"We were thrilled with the support from IMEC. The Six Sigma Green Belt training has empowered our team to identify and eliminate inefficiencies, leading to significant cost savings and improved operational efficiency. This training has been a game-changer for our continuous improvement efforts."

-Karen Stevens, Controller

RESULTS



\$8,000 in cost savings



\$175,000 increased/retained sales



\$367,813 other savings

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