

LEAN TRAINING AND DIGITAL MAPPING LEAD TO OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES AND IMPROVEMENTS

ABOUT POLYCOR INC, BEDFORD (OPERATIONS). Founded in 1926 as Indiana Limestone Company, the organization was later acquired by Canadian company Polycor. Today, Polycor (Indiana) remains the provider of choice for limestone, an internationally renowned natural stone. Throughout its illustrious history, during which its stone has been used in iconic structures such as the Empire State Building, the National Cathedral, and the Pentagon, Polycor (Indiana) has reliably provided the highest-quality products and services, carefully tailored to the needs of the market, with an environmental, natural focus. Polycor (Indiana) primarily cuts, shapes, and finishes limestone for building and other uses. It operates quarries and mills at multiple locations.

THE CHALLENGE. Polycor (Indiana) reached out to Purdue MEP for support in validating and improving the operational efficiency of its Bedford limestone-cutting facility through Lean implementation training and value stream mapping of one of its fabrication lines.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Purdue MEP conducted a Lean 101 training session with 16 team members from Polycor. Time was also allocated to creating a spaghetti diagram and a digital Value Stream Map (eVSM) of the most complex and process-driven product lines, thin veneer. The eVSM began at the point where the stone is brought to the saws and ended with the finished product in the shipment area, providing a visual representation of the value stream.

Lean training at Polycor successfully equipped employees with a foundational understanding of waste-reduction techniques, fostering a mindset centered on process improvement and minimizing unnecessary steps. The eVSM process validated Polycor's assumptions about inefficiencies in the thin-veneer product line, clearly highlighting areas with excessive handling and movement. This led to a targeted re-layout of a specific area within the thin-veneer line, optimizing the flow between slabbing, breakers, and thin saws. As a result, Polycor has seen significant improvements, eliminating wasted steps in the thin-veneer process and boosting efficiency in the breaking process by repositioning equipment. This initiative resulted in a 9.8% increase in production without requiring additional labor, surpassing the initial efficiency predictions.

"The team really enjoyed the Lean training which was easy to see through the engagement in discussions and activities. The instructor kept the material relevant and relatable for our team. As we continue forward, we are encouraging the team to use what they have learned, find those areas of inefficiencies, and make changes to remove the obstacles and reduce waste. As people make those little changes, they can add up to a lot. We'll continue to push the team to do more of that."

-Jeremy Halterman, Director of Fabrication

RESULTS



Trained **16** employees



9.8% increase in production



Anticipated **\$265,000** more in annual revenue with the same labor

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