

## MONTANA TRUCK COMPANY STRENGTHENS IN-HOUSE CAPABILITIES AND PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH A TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

**ABOUT INTERCONTINENTAL TRUCK BODY.** In the small town of Anaconda, Montana, Intercontinental Truck Body (ITB) manufactures high-quality commercial transportation equipment for clients nationwide and beyond. Founded in the mid-1970s, ITB began by building truck bodies to haul grain. This led to the development of its patented aluminum panel design, which proved rugged, easy to use, and adaptable to a wide range of industrial and military applications. ITB's operations have grown to more than 30 employees, who engineer and manufacture products such as tow vehicles, flatbeds, dump bodies, aircraft loading ramps, platforms, and shelters.

**THE CHALLENGE.** To maintain an environment that produces high-quality, innovative products, ITB's company objectives include increasing productivity and improving employee engagement across its operations. To meet these goals, ITB was interested in expanding and enhancing the training systems available to employees.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** ITB Leadership partnered with the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center to develop and implement new training programs and workforce tools. In the initial phase, MMEC Business Advisor Brian Sullivan recommended a combination of Lean manufacturing and leadership training.

Sullivan led a workshop on the principles and practices of Lean Manufacturing for a team of seven employees. This was followed by on-site Lean Implementation training for the same employees, covering specific activities to help them put the practices into action within their facility. In addition, he conducted a one-on-one training session with the Shop Supervisor focused on communication and leadership skills to support the Lean implementation projects.

Training participants learned the principles of Lean Manufacturing and how to apply them to eliminate waste in ITB's manufacturing operations. The training has helped employees visualize how systematic change in ITB operations can be achieved across areas including safety, efficiency, on-time delivery, cost control, and customer service. Integrating Lean training with supervisory training helps create and maintain a culture of continuous improvement throughout the organization.

Moreover, this project led to multiple follow-on projects between ITB and MMEC. Through a Lean implementation project, ITB engineers and MMEC staff collaborated to review specific production processes for one of the flight line tow tractors, including fabrication, wiring, assembly, and painting. This effort identified improvements expected to reduce waste and increase overall capacity on the vehicle production line.

Subsequently, MMEC Business Advisor Lane Gobbs provided engineering staff with training to conduct failure analysis using computer-aided design. MMEC drew on advanced computing resources at Montana State University to perform the complex analysis. In the short term, this allowed ITB to provide a customer with engineering results for a custom modification of a vehicle design. In the long term, this will not only increase sales but also give ITB the internal ability to verify design work in-house, offering a competitive advantage when presenting proposals to new customers.

## RESULTS



3 increased/retained jobs



\$89,000 in new investment



\$90,000 in cost savings

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"MMEC's technical consultation incorporated high-level analysis toward optimization and safety consideration as it related to critical points within our model. Our engineers worked hand in hand with MMEC along the way...gaining knowledge and insight while bolstering their computer-enabled modeling skills."

-Sean Joyce, ITB Site Leader/General Manager