

KATA ASSISTS MANUFACTURER IN BREAKING DOWN SILOS AND
BOOSTING SALES

ABOUT SMA INC. SMA, Inc. started in 1964 with the father-son team of Bill Hurt, Sr., and Bill Hurt, Jr. It began very modestly with a few farm parts laid out on white butcher paper on an old, dusty ping pong table. Now, after more than fifty years of family ownership, SMA considers itself America's Ag Parts Supplier—and with good reason. SMA provides about 60,000 agricultural parts to customers across the United States. We do this from four distribution centers strategically located in Jonesboro, Arkansas; Corsicana, Texas; Des Moines, Iowa; and Fresno, California. Our product lineup includes trusted mainline brands and value brands, along with our own brands, including TISCO, which is long recognized as a trusted name in tractor parts.

THE CHALLENGE. During the closing of one of SMA's quarterly Strategic Planning meetings, Blant Hurt challenged the group to get all departments more focused on working together, eliminate silos, and pursue their own lean journeys. Interdepartmental silos create significant challenges within organizations by hindering communication, collaboration, and efficiency. When departments work in isolation, it leads to a lack of information sharing and a fragmented understanding of company goals. This disconnection can result in duplicated efforts, inconsistent messaging, and delays in decision-making. Silos also foster a culture of territorialism, where departments prioritize their own objectives over the organization's broader mission, ultimately stifling innovation and decreasing overall productivity. Overcoming these barriers requires intentional efforts to promote cross-functional collaboration and transparent communication.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Working with SMA's continuous improvement team and HR manager, several options were discussed on how to begin eliminating silos. Toyota KATA is a mindset that the warehouse has used for almost two years and has seen tremendous benefits. The team decided that applying the LSK approach with all department challenges aligned would encourage everyone to work together while addressing obstacles. Leader Starter KATA is supporting the removal of departmental silos and establishing a common language for problem-solving and scientific thinking.

"The best part of kata is that it is not just an operations process. It can be utilized by all supporting departments. When everyone speaks the same process language, you have continuity through team building, problem solving, and true synergy. Supporting departments can genuinely support their operational teams."

-Samantha Brandon, HR Manager

RESULTS



\$1.75M increased sales and
\$5M retained sales



\$500,000 in cost savings



6 increased jobs and 20
retained jobs



\$334,125 in new investment

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