

BREWING EXCELLENCE: BEERMAKER PROMOTES CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT THROUGH LEAN TRAINING

ABOUT BAYERN BREWING, INC. Bayern Brewing, a Missoula mainstay since 1987, is the state's oldest operating brewery and among the Rockies' earliest craft breweries. Founded by a brewmaster trained in Bavaria, Bayern has always followed a clear vision of producing authentic German-style beer using time-honored methods and meticulous quality standards. As the business grew, Bayern added a restaurant and biergarten to its facilities, allowing the people of Missoula to also experience traditional German culture and cuisine.

Under the leadership of brewmaster Thorsten Geuer (also trained at historic German breweries), Bayern offers more than a dozen lager styles sold throughout Montana and the Pacific Northwest. He continues to expand the brewery's community and sustainability initiatives, including in-house bottle recycling, eco-friendly packaging, and support for local water conservation and alternative transportation.

THE CHALLENGE. Geuer is a firm believer in continuous learning to enhance his professional development. To complement his expertise in brewing production, Geuer wanted to expand his knowledge of manufacturing systems and strategies that could improve other aspects of brewery operations.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. MMEC Senior Business Advisor Steve Dybdal encouraged Geuer to explore principles of operational excellence, including Lean manufacturing. He enrolled in MMEC's six-week foundational course, taught by Dybdal, and earned his SME Lean Bronze certificate. "The biggest surprise was that there was a theory behind many of the practices I was already doing," said Geuer. "The course made it all come together and gave me a language for explaining it to others." Encouraged by the potential for company-wide improvements, he sponsored three additional team members to take the course the following year. As a follow-up, Dybdal has offered guidance on implementing the course principles throughout the brewery. Over time, implementing the principles from the training courses has yielded tangible benefits for Bayern. Organizational improvements on the production lines have reduced changeover times from approximately 15 minutes to five to seven minutes, and average output has increased from 160 cases of beer per hour to 210. One of the most dramatic improvements is a 50% reduction in inventory, lowering the value of inventory on hand from \$200,000 to \$100,000. Geuer is also observing increased engagement among his staff; for example, after implementing 5S principles, workers understand the importance and value of organizing their workspace and take the maintenance program much more seriously.

RESULTS



\$60,000 increased/retained sales



\$22,000 in new investment



\$65,000 in cost savings

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"This course really helps you question why you do things the way you do and where you can eliminate waste to create more value. Steve Dybdal has been a very good 'northstar' explaining how all these principles come together and showing us how to better use the resources you already have."

-Thorsten Geuer, Brewmaster/Director of Operations