

COMPANY PROFILE

G&B Specialties, Inc. manufactures innovative engineered products, and supplies engineering services to the railroad industry. The company operates a fully-integrated foundry, heat-treating facility, powder coating facility, custom high precision machining shop and product assembly area. Located in Berwick, Pennsylvania, G&B employs 140 people.

SITUATION

The rugged use, exposure to elements and overall working conditions of rail gear components provide G&B Specialties with a constant flow of customer reorders, although general seasonal trends exist for certain products. To continue its trend of increasing both top-line revenue and bottom-line net margins, the company was embarking upon several new endeavors. G&B's management wanted to dramatically improve its on-time delivery rate and increase its net margin by another two percentage points in the near term. Through a joint assessment with NEPIRC G&B discovered that unscheduled machine downtime, transportation waste, uneven production line balancing and inefficiencies within the administrative support functions (order processing, etc.) were frequent contributors to the problem. The management team saw a tremendous opportunity to improve operational performance with the implementation of a Total Lean Enterprise and contacted NEPIRC for assistance.

SOLUTION

NEPIRC and G&B engaged in the development of a comprehensive Process Improvement Plan (PIP) with training and implementation for continuous improvement. The PIP began with G&B participation (Performance Metrics) in identifying key performance metrics, and secondly (Basic Lean Principles & Product Families) to prioritize the various product families. A document was created to communicate the PIP to the entire workforce illustrating the vision, mission, objectives, strategies and plan. Next, a cross-functional team was selected for the highest priority product family for Training in Basic Lean Principles and Value Stream Mapping (VSM). Some of the just-do-it items uncovered during the VSM session resulted in considerable process improvements even before the VSM event was complete. An action plan for several subsequent Kaizen events was created and implemented over the next few months. The resulting reduction manufacturing lead time was now shorter than the administrative portion of the VSM. This prompted a second VSM to be directed at the administrative process (order entry/production scheduling). The resulting action plan and changes reduced the administrative lead time by 75 percent. A VSM event was performed for the next highest product family, and an action plan for an additional PIP was implemented. The results were similar to lead time reductions and productivity improvements generated by a combination of Standard Work (best methods), 6S (Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, Sustain, Safety) Workplace Organization, ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) changes for travel reduction, and visual communication for product flow.

RESULTS // Reduced manufacturing lead time by 80 percent, Reduced administrative lead time by 80 percent, Reduced process steps and hand-offs by 50 percent, Reduced process step time by 30 percent, Increased profits by 10 percent.

TESTIMONIAL

“The NEPIRC Team who provided the Lean training and Kaizen events at G&B Specialties did a wonderful job at getting all employees involved in the events. They had a solid understanding of manufacturing and the industrial environment which added great value to the events.”

- John Mensinger, President
G & B Specialties, Inc., Berwick, Pennsylvania

