

## **LEAN PRINCIPLES PRODUCE POSITIVE CHANGES FOR DEFENSE CONTRACTOR**

### **BACKGROUND:**

**United Support Solutions (USS)** began as a small silk-screening business operated by Joseph Ostering Senior and Joseph Ostering Junior in the household garage in 1980. With growth, USS moved into an industrial building and was joined by Joe Jr's twin brother John and a small staff.

With an expertise in silk-screening, USS launched complementary finishing services to include chemical conversion coating, plating, painting, and powder coating. Soon the company expanded into fabrication, machining, and assembly, becoming the ultimate one-stop manufacturing facility. USS customer accounts include commercial and medical industries, as well as the military.

USS, which is still a family run business, operates two manufacturing facilities in New Jersey that employ 95 individuals.

### **CHALLENGE:**

USS wanted to upgrade the skills of its workforce to improve quality, cost and delivery by developing their LEAN knowledge and skills. Cross training their workers in these skills would allow to them to handle multiple job assignments thus providing the company with a more flexible and productive workforce. A larger group of skilled workers will increase the company's efficiencies.

### **SOLUTION:**

During a telemarketing call from NJMEP, Joseph Ostering Jr. scheduled an appointment to discuss his situation. In the meeting, his objectives were discussed—transform the organization to a full lean enterprise.

Based on an assessment and the training needs, NJMEP advised USS that they were an excellent candidate for a New Jersey Department of Labor Customized Training Grant. With NJMEP's assistance, USS applied for and received the funding.

Over the course of the grant from spring of 2012 to spring of 2013, 31 training sessions took place. 57 members of the USS team were trained in Lean... key management and frontline workers involved with manufacturing, testing, inspecting, packaging and shipping went through the program. Courses included:

- Introduction to Lean Manufacturing
- Value Stream Mapping
- Implementing 5s for Workplace Organizations
- Using Standard Work Methods in Cells
- Production Pull/Kanban
- Implementing Quick Change Over
- Application in The Manufacturing Process
- Financial Benefits of Lean Manufacturing

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## RESULTS:

As a result of USS investing in its workforce: key management and operators were trained in the basics of Lean, Using Value stream mapping they created current and future state value maps that served as a blueprint for the improvement plan, multifunctional teams were created to apply 5S and Visual controls, Kanban systems were utilized to reduce inventory and floor space and Lean principles and concepts were applied to general Business Processes.

When surveyed by NIST 6-12 months after the completion of the project, the study period from spring 2012 to spring 2013, USS reported:

- \$130,000 overall cost savings
- \$49,600 saving in training costs
- \$120,000 invested in new products and/or processes
- 20 employees were retained that otherwise would have been lost

**Implementing Lean Manufacturing with NJMEP helped us become more efficient. We are now able to focus on continuous improvement. The grant they helped us secure made the training possible. USS partnered with NJMEP to participate in MFG Day 2013 and were very pleased with the event.” Joseph J Ostering, President, United Support Solutions, Inc.**

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