

## SOFT SKILLS PRODUCE SOLID RESULTS FOR METALFORMING MANUFACTURER

### BACKGROUND:

Based in Lodi, NJ, **HK Metalcraft** is an ISO/TS certified precision metal stamping house specializing in spring washers, gaskets, custom stampings and simple assemblies. The company, which was incorporated in 1926, is privately held. The Hopp family continues its third generation of leadership. With 50,000 square feet of office, manufacturing, and warehouse space, the company provides its customers personalized service and high quality products.

HK Metalcraft began its relationship with NJMEP even before there was an NJMEP. HK's President, Raymond Hopp, served on an advisory board to establish a New Jersey MEP in the early 1990s. The advisory board met at the Center for Manufacturing Systems at New Jersey Institute of Technology. The project to begin the MEP was headed by Reggie Caudill.

While still serving as a member on the advisory board, Raymond Hopp had HK Metalcraft contracted with NJIT, pre NJMEP, to work on a project to better understand how to specify raw material for draw applications. This simulation study was done by Professor Nori Levy who was assisted by graduate student Yu Quan. Yu was later hired by HK after he completed his studies. Since NJIT was the sponsoring organization for the founding of the MEP, this type of research project was necessary.

### CHALLENGE:

HK Metalcraft continued its relationship with NJMEP, and in 1999, when Robert Osborn took the MEP Quickview Assessment and later the Lean Assessment. This began a long relationship between the two organizations and to HK transforming from a traditional manufacturing company into a Lean operation. Having gone through training and implementing Lean tools and methodologies, the company looked at its personnel. Although quite skilled in running a highly successful business, investing in the soft skills of its employees would take the company to the next level. It was time to upgrade computer and communications skills. With upgraded skills, efficiencies would be improved.

### SOLUTION:

Working closely with NJMEP, areas needing improvement were identified and an action plan was developed to address those challenges. Specialists were selected to implement the plan and a time line for implementation was developed. To assist HK in implementing the training, NJMEP provided assistance in securing New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOLE) training dollars. This would result in an enormous cost saving to the company and also assure that HK would be successful in achieving its goal-to improve employee skills and increase productivity through greater efficiencies.

Within a thirteen-month period, twenty-two employees-supervisors and managers of front-line workers would be trained in:

- PC Skills-email and spreadsheets
- Business Communications
- Team building & leadership
- Time management
- Statistical process control

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HK achieved its goal of giving its supervisors and managers the skills necessary to communicate more effectively with their people, and help them decrease the time necessary to do paperwork. The result—more time to properly oversee, train and develop the skills of the front-line workers. And perhaps most importantly, Raymond Hopp, CEO & President of HK pointed out, “Individuals who are given more responsibility and feel as though they are contributing to the success of an organization, along with the tools and skills to back it up, will find they are more content in their jobs and motivated to do the best job possible.”

## RESULTS:

The overall outcome of the project was:

- Increased employee morale, cooperation and efficiencies.
- A more cohesive, goal oriented workforce
- Improved documentation (The training program helped HK maintain its current certifications in ISO 9001:2008 /TS16949:2009 as these certifications require meticulous paperwork and an on-going commitment to quality. The training helped employees be more efficient in creating and maintaining all the necessary documentation to stay compliant with the ISO standards and maintain their certifications.)

As a result of the training, HK reported in its NIST survey:

- Retaining \$700,000 in sales
- Hired 4 new employees and retained 2 that might have been terminated
- Achieved a cost saving of \$50,000, \$25,000 + in training costs alone
- Was able to avoid \$15,000 in unnecessary investments
- Saw a return of \$150,000 as a result of new products and processes

**Robert Osborn, the Chief Operating Officer of H K Metal Craft Manufacturing Corp., recently noted, “The training resulted in a more cohesive, goal oriented workforce, with a tremendous improvement in the culture of our organization. Responsibilities are now equally divided and delegated properly. We have increased employee morale, cooperation and efficiencies. NJMEP is a trusted resource that we will continue to look to for support.”**

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