

TRAINING INVESTMENTS HELP LIGHTING MANUFACTURER TRIUMPH OVER SUPERSTORM

BACKGROUND:

City Theatrical Inc. (CTI) is a leader and recognized innovator within the entertainment industry. The award winning company invents, manufactures, and customizes unique lighting accessories for the entertainment and architectural industries. CTI was founded in 1986 in NY, moved to Carlstadt, New Jersey and now, also has offices in London, England. Information on its unique lighting can be found on its website, citytheatrical.com. In addition to its products line, CTI also performs custom manufacturing services and manufactures products on an OEM basis for other lighting manufacturers.

CHALLENGE:

2007 was the beginning of a long term relationship for NJMEP and CTI. It began with a complimentary Quickview assessment that laid the foundation for a continuous improvement plan. With the assistance of NJMEP, CTI has implemented an ERP system, provided its employees with soft skills/ ERP training and began transforming the company into a Lean manufacturer. CTI wanted to step up its workforce training.

SOLUTION:

The best way to accomplish the increased training was to apply to the New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOLE) for a customized training grant. Working together, CTI and NJMEP completed and submitted the application; the grant was awarded. The plan was to, over a course of one year, train the CTI team in five Lean tools and techniques, team building and supervisory skills. Enter Sandy, the Superstorm, just short of completing the training, CTI was underwater, literally, as a result of the sheer size of the unprecedented storm surge that came up the Hackensack River. Clean up began. NJMEP rolled up its sleeves to assist. Since the flood forced CTI to make a lot of changes, the company took the opportunity to invest in improvements by upgrading many of its manufacturing systems and infrastructure. New equipment was ordered and NJMEP consulted on improving capacity, flow and quality, reducing part shortages and inventory management.

With the facility restored and the new equipment on its way, CTI was now faced with a whole new training challenge. Once again, NJMEP and CTI embarked on a plan that would restore, and improve, the company's operations.

RESULTS:

Two years later, CTI is better than before Superstorm Sandy struck.

- New equipment improved operations because employees acquired the required skill sets to maximize effectiveness of the equipment.
- Additional Lean Manufacturing techniques were adapted.
- There has been an increased focus on Business Development.
- Sales & Marketing skills improved enabling CTI to grow its business aggressively.

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When surveyed by NIST, after the workforce training and post Sandy consulting and rebuilding, CTI reported:

- Increased sales of \$500,000
- \$4,500,000 of retained sales that could very easily have been lost due to the circumstances
- 30 employees kept their jobs and 2 additional folks were hired
- CTI invested close to \$700,000 in new equipment, information systems, new processes and workforce training
- \$24,000 in training costs were saved as a result of NJDOL's investment in the company and there was \$200,000 in general cost savings

NJMEP and CTI are still traveling together on the continuous improvement journey to assure that CTI remains the leader in its industry. Ongoing work such as R&D Tax credits, Business Continuity Planning and Employee Recruiting is on the CTI and NJMEP calendars.

When asked about working with NJMEP to implement Lean, Gary Falls president of CTI responded, "NJMEP has provided some excellent Lean Manufacturing courses for us. We are still reaping the benefits of the courses that were done here in terms of improved workflows, efficiencies and organization—all of which have helped improve our quality and on-time delivery. They have a record of helping us accomplish our objectives."

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