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Success Stories

Manchester Printer Cartridge Company Proves to be More than Just Reliable

NH MEP Helps Reliable Technologies Improve Facility Layout, Increase Production

Manchester, NH - Wayne Justason, the Vice President of Manufacturing at Reliable Technologies in Manchester is always looking for ways to make some cost-reducing changes at his company. For more than 14 years, Reliable has manufactured cartridges for printers and fax machines, and provided printer sales, services, and supplies. Justason recognized an opportunity to incorporate some positive modifications at Reliable to keep up with their growing production demands.

Justason was familiar with Lean Manufacturing, a technique using a simple, yet systematic approach in order to eliminate waste and reduce manufacturing costs, while increasing productivity and thought Lean could help the company streamline operations. He knew the New Hampshire Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NH MEP) is an expert in applying Time Wise Principles of Lean Manufacturing.

The NH MEP team mainly focused on the assembly areas at Reliable, working with employees to improve the layout of the facility, in order to keep manufacturing at a comfortable and efficient pace. The first step was to implement Time Wise Value Stream Management System, a process that maps out the current manufacturing processes to determine where changes and improvements can be made and then a future state map is created which provides a roadmap for implementing the improvement ideas.

"Through these processes, the work flow was streamlined, and three work areas were combined into one work cell, reducing the time and distance of the production process. As a result, we have been able to manufacture about 120 cartridges in 6 hours as opposed to the 80 we were making before. That's a 50 percent productivity increase," said Justason.

The next step was to rework the disassembly areas, where employees take used toner

cartridges apart, run tests to determine what needs to be replaced and what can be used again, then they clean them up and make new ones. The disassembly part of production is still a work in progress, since the work done by the team is dictated by each individual cartridge.

"We are currently 50 percent of the way to completing our transformation to Lean Manufacturing, and we have experienced a 50 percent improvement in our daily production output with the same staff as we had before," said Justason. "The outcome we have experienced from the work we have done with the NH MEP has exceeded my expectations."