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Acme Monaco Springs Forward with the Help of Maine MEP
Company Incorporates Lean Principles to Organize Workplace and Increase Productivity

PRESQUE ISLE, ME – Acme Monaco nestled in the city of Presque Isle, Maine has only 45 employees, yet this small company develops a diverse custom-made line of medical assemblies and orthodontic wires as well as compression springs and retaining rings for the commercial sector. Because they use such a wide range of metals and make multiple types of wire construction available to their customers, their production line can be an extremely busy one.

“We had our manufacturing line set up in a cellular flow already, which helped production move along efficiently. However, there were some processes and areas of the workplace that we knew could be reworked,” said Mark Jarrett, plant manager of Acme Monaco. “Our company decided that we could use some Lean Principles to help us become more organized and called on the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP) for some training.”

“Acme Monaco closed their Presque Isle plant down for a full day so everyone could participate in the Time Wise® 101 Principles of Lean Manufacturing workshop,” said Brian Sutherland, Maine MEP project manager. “After learning about the concepts of Lean, the company requested two 5S Kaizen events, a series of small activities aimed at making large improvements in productivity and eliminating waste at the same time.”

The first Kaizen event was in the Posting Cell area, which focused on workplace organization and the layout and labeling of materials in the area. The second Kaizen event in the Maintenance Department focused on all-over cleanliness and organization.

“The employees were able to increase their available floor space by 30 square feet, which allows for production line expansion and overall plant capacity,” added Sutherland.

“We were also able to reduce batch sizes to make them more manageable. For order sizes greater than 200, batches are now moved and inspected hourly to minimize waste. This reduces lead time up to ten percent,” said Jarrett. “Also, extra parts are now sent with the order, if allowed by contract. This minimizes the number of parts that are discarded.”

In order to make sure they continue with these improvements, the employees at Acme Monaco created four visual aids to help standardize and sustain their progress.

“As a direct result from our work with the Maine MEP, Acme Monaco’s Presque Isle facility is able to open up capacity for future growth and stay competitive. We are sincerely thankful for their assistance,” added Jarrett.

The Maine MEP is an affiliate of the NIST under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2000 manufacturing and business “coaches” whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits, and enhanced global competitiveness. For more information on the Maine MEP program call 1-800-637-4634.

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