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For More Information Please Contact:
Muriel Mosher
Vice President for Government and Public Relations
207-623-0680 or
murielm@timewisems.com

**MORNINGSTAR MARBLE AND GRANITE GOES LEAN AND GREEN
WITH MAINE MEP ASSISTANCE**

Maine Manufacturer Changes Plant Layout, Saves Money & Time

TOPSHAM, ME – Nick Whatley, president of Morningstar Marble and Granite, has taken great care to assemble a team of skilled craftspeople, designers, and knowledgeable customer support professionals to make sure all products from the company are created to the highest possible standard. Whatley’s philosophy of treating each project individually instead of looking for a “one size fits all” solution recently came into play when he wanted to make some changes to the company’s manufacturing processes.

“I had been studying Lean Manufacturing and was ready to move forward with implementing it at our company. So I researched firms that could help us with this, and called on Jon Kirsch from the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP),” said Whatley. “We wanted help from an organization that could tailor to our specific needs and improve quality within all our product lines.”

“To accomplish the goals of reducing cycle times and increasing yields, all Morningstar employees participated in Time Wise® Lean 101 to help them understand the concepts of Lean manufacturing. Morningstar shut down the company for a full day to facilitate this training,” said Kirsch. “The Maine MEP team worked with the Morningstar employees to create a Value Stream Map of their manufacturing process which helped them identify the opportunities for improvements throughout the manufacturing process and facility and develop the solutions.”

By conducting a plant layout kaizen, a system of continuous improvement, the outside and the inside loading area were redesigned, resulting in a total savings of 4.25 hours per day. Material breakage was reduced by about 6 percent and a new safety program was implemented, resulting in a significant amount of savings from the insurance company.

Morningstar implements morning meetings where near misses, quality problems, and other company related issues are discussed, assigned and tracked, further demonstrating their commitment to continuous improvement to provide the best in product and service.

“The culture in the company has changed here. We are constantly looking for ways to improve and really feel like we are a cohesive team. We are now able to focus more on our safety program where we do root cause analysis and tracking on all mistakes or problems encountered. We’ve also made some other adjustments that have resulted in a 27 percent reduction of our carbon footprint,” added Whatley. “It is now clear to me that

had we not made these improvements by implementing the Lean techniques, we would be in serious trouble. The Maine MEP really changed us for the better.”

About Maine MEP

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 or visit www.mainemep.org.

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