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**OPENING A WINDOW TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES: MAINE MEP  
BOOSTS LITTLE HARBOR WINDOW COMPANY**  
*Window and Door Manufacturer Increases Sales, Gains Floor Space, and  
Increases Production Output*

**BERWICK, ME** – Established in 1983, Little Harbor Window Company, Inc. originally built custom-shaped windows and doors for only the Southern Maine market. Twenty-five years later, the manufacturer has grown to 39 employees and is known throughout New England as one of the highest quality manufacturers of custom mahogany doors and windows, with a reputation that is unsurpassed in their industry.

With architects, builders, and homeowners consistently requesting custom designs, Little Harbor Window knew they had to find a way to increase production output. They approached the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP) to assist them with employee training in Lean manufacturing fundamentals. The project managers then performed a business assessment and issued a report with strengths and weaknesses that lead to a Lean pilot program training funded by a DOL/ETA (Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration) grant.

“The Maine MEP’s Lean training helped us to implement systemic changes which we needed to double throughput with our existing amount of floor space. Our employees were engaged in a Lean 101, Value Stream Mapping, and Kaizen Improvement activities,” said Jim Eaton, president of Little Harbor Window. “The education we received from the Maine MEP gave us the tools we needed to move forward with our ideas, and immediately we noticed a number of results.”

The employees took part in Time Wise® Lean 101-Lean Awareness simulation, Lean 201-Value Stream Mapping (VSM), and Lean 202-Kaizen Improvement activities. Two VSMs focused on the manufacturing processes: one in the Mill Room that reduced lead time by 57 percent, process time by 56 percent and changeover time by 83 percent. The other was in the Paint to Final Inspect, which reduced lead time by 35 percent and process time by 46 percent.

“Two Kaizen events were then planned from the VSM efforts and focused on the engineering paperwork and a 5-S event in the loading dock area. The engineering Kaizen reduced information search time by 90 percent. After work on the loading dock, Little Harbor Window gained 504 square feet of space,” said Bob Doiron, project manager for the Maine MEP.

“We also saved thousands of dollars as a result of these processes, increased sales by \$300 thousand and hired two new employees,” added Eaton. “We have also improved communication within the company by consistently meeting with each department to make continuous improvements. I would enthusiastically encourage all companies to engage the MEP so that together they can improve productivity, retain and possibly create jobs, and increase the capacity of the company.”

#### **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](http://www.mainemep.org).

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