Maine MEP Offers Lean Education Courses for All Employees
New partnership will make Lean courses available online to all Maine manufacturing employees

Augusta, Maine: The Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP) announced today that it has partnered with Camden-based Lean education provider Back in the Game, Inc., to offer “Lean Manufacturing,” an e-learning course for manufacturers to educate every employee on the concepts of Lean enterprise management. The online availability of the course will make it easier and more efficient for Maine manufacturers to provide Lean training to their entire workforce.

Maine MEP is well-known for providing process improvement training and consulting to manufacturers throughout the state. Most manufacturers typically request that a few key employees be trained in the Lean manufacturing methodology, followed by an onsite initiative led by an MEP project manager.

“Through this new partnership, we now can offer every manufacturer a convenient means of introducing Lean concepts and procedures to all employees. For a flat fee, we are able to offer a manufacturer a packaged electronic course that it can install on its own network, so that companies can educate every single person in their organization,” said Muriel Mosher, Maine MEP’s president.

Some Maine businesses have already benefited from Back in the Game’s Lean education programs. Clark Marine, with operations in Manchester, Monmouth, and Belgrade, has experienced major improvements in workplace organization, worker proficiency, and process flow, resulting in significantly improved margins within their marine products service and storage revenue streams.

“The learning is easy to comprehend and is organized in a fashion that develops Lean thinkers who can plan and implement the transformation to Lean at every level of the organization,” said Rob Brown, the CEO of Clark Marine.

These e-learning courses have been offered by more than 250 colleges and universities in the U.S. and have been used by hundreds of companies including many from the Fortune 500.

“Since most MEPs across the country are the established authority on process improvement and Lean transformation, they are the logical source for Lean education in most states,” said Keith Gilpatrick, co-author of the courses and the book “The Elusive Lean Enterprise,” and vice president of Maine-based Back in the Game, Inc.

“Imagine the money the state would save if every school system, hospital and state agency operated on the principles of Lean?” he added.

What is meant by “Lean?” Lean creates an organizational culture that focuses on continuous improvement via process improvements which minimize wastes, delivers value to end customers, and with higher quality.

“Many organizations that attempt to go lean face resistance among staff who misunderstand the program as a way to eliminate jobs. The goal of going lean is actually quite the opposite,” said Gilpatrick. “We intentionally package our courses as a ‘site license’ so that every employee can learn the principles and
take an active role in reducing waste in every form. The end result is an organization that grows, not shrinks."

In 2014 Maine MEP clients reported that Lean projects and related MEP activities helped them save $5.2 million in cost savings, noted Mosher. “That number could be increased multiple times if manufacturers across the state took advantage of this online solution and trained their employees in the techniques of Lean manufacturing.”

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Maine manufacturers employed more than 51,000 employees as of December 2014.

Organizations interested in obtaining a site license for one of the Lean e-learning courses should contact Bob Doiron at Maine MEP at 623-0680 or by email at bobd@mainemep.org. More information on the online lean manufacturing can be found at http://www.mainemep.org/online_lean_manufacturing.pdf.

About Maine MEP
The Maine MEP is a program of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development and an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP system 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 2,000 manufacturing and business professionals whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits and enhanced global competitiveness. For information on the Maine MEP program, please visit www.mainemep.org, or phone 1-800-MEP-4MFG.