



## Success Story: Ashland Industries

[www.ashlandind.com](http://www.ashlandind.com)

### Profile

Location: Ashland, Wisconsin  
Years in Business: 55  
No. of Employees: 48  
Products: Compact, agricultural, industrial and heavy industrial earthmovers and scrapers  
NWMOC Projects: Lean Certification Training, Lean Accounting, Strategic Planning

### Situation

Ashland Industries was sold to four new owners about 10 years ago. Since then, the company has grown to ten times its former size. Carol Lindsey, Engineering Manager and one of the new owners, had a background in lean manufacturing, which she brought with her to the company. While visiting the Wisconsin Department of Commerce website, Carol found a Manufacturing Extension Partner in Northwest Wisconsin—the NWMOC. She called and spoke with the director, who put her in touch with Project Manager Aaron Bialzik. When she heard about the NWMOC's Lean Certification Program, she enrolled in the course as a refresher and to "lend some credibility to all my talk about lean." Carol and another owner also attended NWMOC's Lean Accounting class, and they used NWMOC's services to assist with their strategic planning process.

*I really like NWMOC's affordable services and the fact that they are paying attention to northwest Wisconsin. Their "we're here to help you" attitude makes for an easy relationship. – Carol Lindsey, Engineering Manager*



*Carol Lindsey, one of the owners, displays a parts inventory control manual.*



*Ashland I-180 earthmover in production*

### Project

Lean principles and 5S have been applied to numerous areas of production, resulting in time and cost savings throughout the plant. Parts that were previously drilled and bent on-site are now purchased predrilled and prebent for a fraction of the former cost. Because many of the scraper components are heavy, swinging jib cranes are used during assembly. During one of their weekly "war on waste" meetings, an employee mentioned that he often has to wait for a variable speed jib to correctly align the holes when assembling parts. The company purchased another variable speed overhead hoist for him, so he no longer has to wait and he can more accurately align the holes. Another employee mentioned that he has to trim every part he receives because it is too long. The lean journey at Ashland Industries continues as they redesign their processes to improve production times and eliminate waste. Structural steel parts are now placed closer to their assembly area in color coded racks to enable "at a glance" inventory.



*Color-coded racks allow at-a-glance inventory*

### Results

- Increased usable floor space by 6,000 sq. ft.
- Increased weekly production from 4 scrapers to 5 scrapers without adding staff
- Sales increased from \$1.2 million to \$10 million
- Increased pride in and ownership of work areas
- Increased employee comfort level in discussing production bottlenecks