



Success Story: Black River Industries

www.blackriverindustries.org

Profile

Location: Medford, Wisconsin
 Years in Business: Since Oct. 1973
 No. of Employees: 34 Staff and 80 Clients
 Products: Enriching the Lives of People with Disabilities through Vocational Rehabilitation, Sheltered Employment, Transportation Services, Food Services, Day Services, Residential Services, Custodial Services, Confidential Shredding
 NWMOC Projects: Lean Workshops, Value Stream Mapping, and 5S

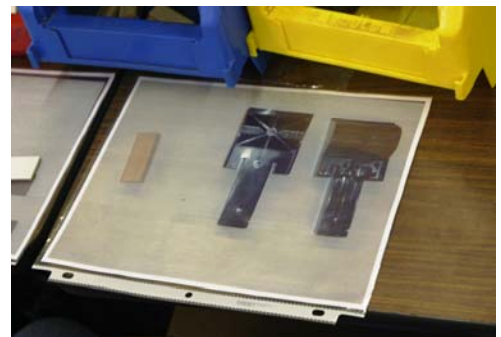
Situation

Teri Duellman, Production Manager of Black River Industries subcontracting subassembly work, realized that they were spending too much time quality checking their clients' work. They were also challenged by timely product deliveries. Beth Carlson of Catholic Charities, with whom BRI is affiliated, gave Teri a brochure on a Principles of Lean course being offered by the NWMOC in Chippewa Falls via a Community-Based Economic Development (CBED) grant. Teri completed the Lean course, and Black River Industries applied for and received a CBED grant.



Black River Industries proudly displays their mission statement in a central location

"NWMOC helped us streamline our production processes . . . I would highly recommend them!" -- Paul Thornton, Director, Black River Industries



Photographs of parts become job aids to assist client workers

Project

The disabled clients at Black River Industries bag parts for numerous manufacturers and they are paid according to their piecework. Using lean principles, the staff split several jobs into smaller increments. They also enhanced their standardized work by creating job aids that included photos of parts that the clients were bagging. Lean principles are being used on over 40 different bagging jobs, and bagging time has been cut in half on one line and reduced from 1 week to 1 day on another line. Skill levels are extremely varied among their clients, but the clients are happier because they are able to produce more in less time; and, the more they produce, the bigger their paychecks. One client went from producing 100 bags per day to over 600 bags per day.

The carts used to transport parts were reworked slightly to eliminate the need to bend over to access the parts. Preproduction changeover was reduced from 1 hour to 10 minutes on one bagging line. By adding in-process checks, one line no longer requires quality checking by staff; the clients are able to check their own work. All of these improvements were made without any additional investments, and they gained 3200 square feet on the production floor, increasing their capacity by 10 to 15%.

Production Manager Teri Duellman commented "I thought it was awesome working with the NWMOC project managers. It was amazing." Sue Walls, who was also trained in lean methods, said "It looked hard, but once you applied it, it was very simple. We wondered why we didn't do it before."

Results

- Increased production floor capacity by 10+%
- Increased throughput on one line by 80%
- Increased throughput on another line by 50%
- Reduced changeover time on one line by 83%
- Increased efficiency of one client by 600%
- Improved staff and client morale