



From the GBMP Lean Case Study Library (CS No. 47)

Dole & Bailey: Helping Employees Develop a Taste for Lean

Dole & Bailey has been a part of New England's agricultural heritage for 140 years, as a premier supplier of fine meats, seafood and specialty foods to the region's respected culinary community. A family-owned and operated business, Dole and Bailey prides itself on sourcing quality, healthy, great-tasting foods and educating the culinary community about their distinctive products. D&B operates an ISO 9001:2008 registered meat and seafood processing plant in Woburn, Massachusetts as well as a distribution warehouse for a wide variety of other specialty food-related products. About 60% of sales come from custom cut and packaged meat items, and other meat products. The balance of sales comes from gourmet groceries, seafood and various other food items. The company operates under a USDA/ FDA/ supervised HACCP plan. Dole and Bailey's fleet of refrigerated vehicles is a regular sight on highways throughout the Northeast, on their way to deliver customer orders.



In 2007, Scott Matheson, one of the owners and Chief Operating Officer of Dole & Bailey, attended the Northeast Shingo conference, an annual event organized by the Greater Boston Manufacturing Partnership (GBMP). He was looking for ways to reduce costs and increase productivity in order to combat increased competition in what he considered to be a shrinking market. The conference provided an inspiring introduction to the power of lean and in the Spring of 2008, using funding from a Massachusetts workforce training grant, Dole was ready to kick off their lean journey. Unfortunately that was also about the time the recession was hitting the region full force..... What to do???

In the words of COO Scott Matheson, "at about the time we were just beginning our training we were also faced with cutting pay and bringing in capital equipment. We had people watching the Toast Kaizen video to learn about waste and were trying to help our employees see lean as a way out of the recession. We knew it would take all of us to change the business. However, in the beginning our employees were skeptical, and worried that lean was really about reducing the work force."

So how did Dole & Bailey change peoples' thinking? Besides ensuring everyone in the company received lean training and got a chance to "practice", Ron Pujalte, GBMP Continuous Improvement Manager, points to management involvement as a key enabler in the company's lean journey. "Scott and his management team were active in the training and improvement programs and they also realized that their "office" was really the plant and warehouse, and they committed to spending a lot of time in the work processes. They were there to help people when they needed it, they helped employees get ideas implemented, they reinforced the need for team work and, perhaps most importantly, they let people know their efforts were appreciated by saying 'thank you' and celebrating small successes."

In addition Dole & Bailey leaders made it a point to take employees to visit other companies and attend more conferences to extend their collective learning. They also focused early efforts on smaller problems, or the "low hanging fruit", in order to give people some early successes and build their confidence in solving problems. Dole & Bailey leaders understood that making mistakes is part of the learning process and a negative response by management to mistakes can kill the entire lean effort. Instead, they committed to helping teams learn from any mistakes made along the way.

So what are some of the results the Dole & Bailey team has gotten so far? For one, the meat production room has been completely reconfigured to improve product flow and productivity. Consequently, Dole & Bailey has seen a 200% improvement in portion control capacity, a 20% reduction in labor cost, and a 3% improvement in yields in this part of the business. Equipment is on wheels, employees are cross-trained and staffing play books have been created so the area can be quickly and easily changed around depending on customer requirements. The increase in capacity in the area from improvements has allowed them to open a new wholesale account arm of the business.

In the sales department, a great deal of work has been done to standardize information and consolidate databases to reduce time to set up new products, decrease time spent on computer searches, and reduce potential for errors..

The warehouse added clear, lexan plastic doors to their vacuum tubes so information, when sent, can be seen quickly and easily, without walking. The layout in this area has also been drastically changed to make it easier to pick and fill orders, with commonly picked items centrally located. Through 5S and visual systems, warehouse forklift drivers work has become simpler, with easy to negotiate aisle ways and computer tools placed at the point of use. Even the truck drivers have made changes for the better; one example is the in bound driver logs, placed on the wall at the loading dock to give instructions about their work.

So what advice does COO Scott Matheson have for other leaders and managers who may be embarking on the lean journey? "I learned it starts with you; you have to manage people and processes effectively to foster participation. You have to know your people at all levels and have compassion for them as they sometimes struggle to change. You have to be there for them and help when they need help. If you see a problem, help get it corrected as fast as possible. Finally, commit to bringing employees ideas to reality as soon as possible. Your ideas are not the only ones that are important!"

For more information about Dole and Bailey please visit www.doleandbailey.com
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