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## Initial continuous improvement efforts deliver 68% productivity gain in less than six months

A Peabody, MA company that manufactures servo actuators, gear heads, precision gearing components and related motion control products used in applications ranging from aerospace, industrial robots, medical devices, machine tools, measuring and test equipment, printing machines, to semiconductor equipment has made significant gains in productivity recently using lean methods.

After just a handful of training sessions on continuous improvement principles, systems and tools with Dan Fleming of GBMP, and some team building and communication skills training with GBMP's Mike Scarpone, employees have put their learning to work to make significant process improvements yielding excellent bottom line results. **In just the last six months the organization has seen productivity rise by 68%, and daily output is up 50%.**

The company leveraged a Massachusetts Workforce Training Grant to assist with their efforts to train employees on ways to reduce waste and inefficiency in their processes. After an initial introduction to lean class, employees went on to learn and apply workplace organization (5S), problem solving, teamwork, and mistake-proofing (Pokayoke) concepts as well as other practical methods for improving the flow of material and information within their plant. In total they have had about 10 days of training so far.

Unlike many other companies, when the economic climate caused a slow down in business during the second half of 2009 this organization chose not to release people and instead made a significant commitment to employees and their lean program by using free time to train and conduct improvement projects. As a result, teams of employees have moved machines around, simplified their shop floor scheduling process, implemented a cross training program and created visual systems to clarify operator assignments and kitting activities. By shaping and applying lean concepts learned, and emphasizing teamwork, employees have collaborated to make positive changes, gained confidence in their improvement skills, and are excited to press for even more results in the months to come. Based on these early successes, plans are in place to move ahead with additional training and practice in other lean methods such as set-up reduction and policy deployment in order to continue the lean journey.

Dan Fleming, Continuous Improvement Manager from the not-for-profit Greater Boston Manufacturing Partnership (GBMP), primary trainer and hands-on coach/guide for this machine shop had this to say about their initial lean activity: ***"It's amazing what can occur when management genuinely supports Continuous Improvement and employees are provided time to practice and implement the tools."***

The company president has always been a firm believer in the powers of continuous improvement and the abilities of his employees to take the company to new levels of operational excellence. ***"GBMP took the time to understand our business and analyze which lean principles would provide the needed foundation for our continuous improvement efforts and yield the biggest return on our training investment. I was very impressed with the level of knowledge, experience and dedication of Dan and Mike. With their training and guidance, our employees made changes to our organization's processes, workflow and communication which were visible not only to the eye, but also through KPI's and in our financials. This is just a first step for our company and we look forward to strengthening our relationship with GBMP as we move forward in our journey of continuous improvement. "***

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