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SURGE SUPPRESSION SURGES AHEAD WITH LEAN LESSONS FROM FLORIDA MEP
All Employees Learn Lean Methodologies, Productivity Increases Almost 30 Percent

DESTIN, FL – Surge Suppression, Inc. is a manufacturer of a complete line of quality Transient Voltage Surge Suppression devices for AC and DC power, data and telecommunications. Each year, they conduct trainings that are aimed at improving production and service to their customers. But this year, they took a step that transformed the way they've been manufacturing.

“Since we do beneficial trainings every year, I had been reading up on the Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Florida MEP) and was intrigued by the principles of Lean manufacturing,” said Richard Hotchkiss, president of Surge Suppression, Inc. “I wanted all 18 of our employees to go through the Lean process and learn the tools associated with it, such as Value Stream Mapping, Kaizen events and Kanban.”

The Florida MEP helped Surge Suppression secure an Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) grant to begin the Lean process.

“We started with the introduction to lean, Time Wise® Lean 102. They took the lessons and ran with it,” said Neil Kagan, Florida MEP project manager. “We came up with an action item list, but then went right into Kaizen, where we conducted a series of events to rapidly improve work cells and streamline the production process.”

“We have a lot of different products that we make, and decided to combine our cell manufacturing into an assembly line, and that created a flex line. We got this idea from what Neil and the Florida MEP taught us, but we augmented it and came up with a system that worked for us. It works like an assembly line, but can be changed quickly,” added Hotchkiss. “By doing this, we increased our productivity by about 30 percent, our growth by 20 percent, and were even able to make some new hires.”

Hotchkiss wants to continue on with the Lean transformation and is already talking to the Florida MEP about next steps.

“The folks at the Florida MEP are easy to work with. They didn’t take a “one size fits all” mentality with us at all. They spent a lot of time listening and came up with some great solutions,” said Hotchkiss. “I would recommend them to anyone and look forward to working with them again. They know what they are talking about and took the time to get things the way we needed it, which was wonderful.”

The Florida MEP is an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP 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 2000 manufacturing and business “coaches” whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity,

increased profits, and enhanced global competitiveness. For more information on the Florida MEP program call 321-939-4000.

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