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Grant lets Synchron get its work in sync

Manufacturer will streamline assembly process

BY PATRICK PETERSON • FLORIDA TODAY • JUNE 22, 2009

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The 25 employees of the high-tech manufacturer Synchron EMS in Melbourne will learn to streamline their work processes thanks to a \$30,000 Department of Defense grant.

"It's really intended to empower and involve the people on the assembly lines that do the work," Syncon EMS president John Sjolander said of the Lean manufacturing philosophy. "Because they're closest to the process, they're best able to identify and implement changes in their process to be more efficient."

The Melbourne company primarily builds printed circuit board assemblies that go into military hardware. The 20,000 square-foot facility has three high-speed, automated assembly lines.

A representative from the Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership will lead the company in a Lean Transformation course from Time Wise Solutions of Celebration. Created by Toyota and often known as Lean, the process eliminates anything that doesn't create value for the customer while empowering people beyond just management to improve methods.

"Florida MEP is beginning the process of reaching out to companies and signing them up for similar Lean activities," MEP Vice President Terry Shehata said. "Its primary focus is on small- to medium-size defense suppliers or want-to-be defense suppliers. The funding itself is to hire project managers who have engineering expertise."

The Florida MEP is an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The \$30,000 cost of the training has been paid for by a federal earmark secured by former U.S. Rep. Dave Weldon.

Sjolander, a computer science graduate of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, has seen the Lean program applied on a previous job.

"I think the result can be pretty impressive," he said. "But I don't think that I'd call the changes radical as far as what our people do every day.

"It's part of a continuous improvement process. You can always get better."

Streamlined operations will help the company, which has added three new customers during the past month and expects to hire a dozen workers during the next six months.

The training began June 10 with sessions to familiarize the staff with the concepts and benefits of lean manufacturing, and begin value stream mapping.



Tamara Burke solders surface mount parts on a circuit board at Synchron EMS in Melbourne. The manufacturing company received a grant to help them streamline their work processes. (Christina Stuart, FLORIDA TODAY)



David Glionna programs and operates a high-speed placement machine at Synchron EMS. (Christina Stuart, FLORIDA TODAY)

MORE INFO

To inquire about training programs administered by the Florida MEP, contact Director of Programs Winnie Grebey at 321-939-4000 or winifredg@floridamep.org.

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