



Article 269

November 25, 2012

## **Fabricator Has Long-Term Commitment to Lean Manufacturing**

*By Jennifer Sinsabaugh, Operations Director, New Mexico MEP*

When David Smith, owner of Taycar Enterprises in Albuquerque, phased out the use of paper in his sheet metal fabrication and assembly plant, it pushed some office workers beyond their hard-copy comfort zones.

Going paper-free was just one part of Smith's efforts to bring the principles of lean manufacturing to the business his father started in 1983, but it was harder than the changes he instituted to make his job shop operate more efficiently. Now the business stores all its records electronically and conducts all its correspondence by email.



Smith got involved with lean manufacturing about seven years ago after he heard that another manufacturer in his industry was attending workshops run by the New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership. Smith attended a workshop and has since sent every permanent employee at least once for training in lean manufacturing principles.

### **What It Is**

The New Mexico MEP is part of a nationwide network of nonprofit centers. Its mission is to help managers and core workers at New Mexico companies understand and apply the principles of lean manufacturing through workshops and on-site training and analysis.

"They don't tell you you're doing this wrong or right, but they make you look at how you're doing things," Smith said. "It's an ongoing process. You're never actually done."

MEP trainer Karen Converse agrees with Smith's appraisal. To internalize the principles of lean manufacturing, it's best for a company to make small, incremental improvements over time than to try to implement the entire menu of lean techniques at once. A company's production system needs to stabilize between improvements, she said, because when one process or area is streamlined, it often causes bottlenecks in other areas, and those weaknesses need to be addressed before more techniques are introduced.

Many businesses go through three or four rounds of improvements before reaching their lean goals, she said. It can take four or five years allowing for breaks in between.

"We've seen the benefits sooner than that," said Smith. "In our business, everyone wants us right now. Now we can react more quickly."

Most of Taycar's customers are in the aerospace, defense and electronics industries, Smith said. Taycar takes the customer's designs and raw materials and fashions a product made to order. Its customers include Sandia and Los Alamos national laboratories.

### Spreading the Word

Smith is so sold on lean manufacturing that he has "schooled" some of his vendors and customers on ways to eliminate waste and increase productivity and profitability. His production manager has trained to become a lean trainer.

MEP approaches training by simulating real-world situations, using experts from the government, nonprofit and industry sectors to guide participants through the transition from a traditional manufacturing environment to one that is more competitive and flexible.

New Mexico MEP serves businesses throughout the state from its offices in Albuquerque, Roswell and Farmington. It's supported by federal, state and private funds, but MEP workshops charge a nominal participation fee. Funding options are available for qualifying businesses. For more information or to verify eligibility, call 505-262-0921 or visit .

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