

# Blazing a New Lean Path



## Background

For the past 55 years, Metallurgical Processing, Inc. (MPI) has provided a wide range of metal treating services to regional manufacturers. The 38,000 square foot facility in New Britain, Connecticut is home to 55 employees and offers hardening and softening of parts for wear resistance and machinability, as well as PVD coating, cold treating, and a variety of support services.

## Situation

First exposed to Lean methodologies by a key customer, MPI participated in a two-tier value stream mapping exercise lead by CONNSTEP. A two-tier value stream follows the flow of a component as if the customer and supplier processes were fully integrated. The event illustrated where MPI had opportunities for improvement. The team discovered it was the process of repackaging product and moving it to the next process that created a bottleneck. They knew that every process has a flow to it and identified the tempering department as the common denominator to flow problems. It was a log jam for the entire facility, with product jammed everywhere and people searching for every order and constantly moving products around.

## Solution

CONNSTEP urged MPI to seek funding through the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund's PRIME program. Administered by Connecticut Light & Power, the PRIME program provides businesses with training in Lean Manufacturing techniques in order to streamline product flow, eliminate or reduce waste, improve production efficiency, minimize environmental impact, and reduce electrical energy consumption. The tempering department bottleneck was addressed first; however, a new bottleneck was developed down the process in the inspection area since the department

## Results for MPI:

- Hired 4 new employees and trained all staff
- 20% increase in production capacity
- \$585,000 in increased sales
- \$350,000 in retained sales
- \$180,000 in cost savings



*The staff at CONNSTEP is an esteemed partner in our Lean journey. The staff works well with every level of employee from the President down to the shop floor, identifying the best ways to leverage our staff talent and energy, helping us build a Lean culture.*

Dennis Perry  
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wasn't capable of handling the increased flow of work. Soon after, the PRIME program was again leveraged to implement standard work and a FIFO (first in, first out) system within the inspection department. With the FIFO system implemented and employees given direction through standard work, an accurate flow of product and information became visible within the department. This led to a reduction in turn time from seven days to five and a 20 percent increase in capacity.



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