

Value Stream Mapping Helps Reduce Lead Time



Background

Wepco Plastics is a specialty provider of plastic injection molded parts and rapid aluminum tooling. Wally Parmelee launched the company in his basement during the early 1980s and it's been family owned and operated ever since. The family run business has forged a culture that focuses on ensuring customer satisfaction.

Their well-earned reputation is to continually work on producing the highest quality, American made products by investing in process improvement, training and equipment that meets their customer's needs. The core of what they do is all about innovation which is critical to mold making and plastic injection molding operations.

Wepco is an integral part of the product design, development and production process, helping their customers bring new products to market. Through hard work, state-of-the-art machinery, and extensive experience the company delivers quality, cost-effective products, on-time and on-schedule.

Situation

Wepco's expert molding technicians produce quality parts using quality tooling to finish the process and ensure a quick turnaround. In addition to their best-in-class molds, the tool room can also provide job shop machined metal parts, custom sinker EDM work, 3D printing services, SLAs and more.

A key strategic goal of Wepco Plastics is to increase market share and improve customer satisfaction. To help achieve this, the company resolved to decrease its overall lead time from eight to four weeks per average order. One of the key processes within the

Results for Wepco Plastics:

- Increased sales: \$500K
- Jobs created: 3
- Cost savings: \$50K
- Investments saved/avoided: \$150K



After evaluating our mold making process and identifying improvement opportunities, we've significantly reduced our overall lead time and improved first pass yield. With our improved workflow, we're able to get jobs out quicker.

– David Parmelee
President
Wepco Plastics, Middlefield CT



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business is mold making which takes up 50% (or four weeks) of the overall lead time.

By streamlining and simplifying processes within its mold making value stream, Wepco Plastics sought to reduce its average lead time. The company was also looking to streamline scheduling, resource allocation as well as collaboration through visual management. Wepco engaged the services of CONNSTEP to assist in reaching their stated goals.

Solution

Wepco Plastics management discussed their stated goals and intentions with CONNSTEP who recommended a Value Stream Mapping/Kaizen workshop to meet their needs. In advance of the workshop, CONNSTEP collaborated with Wepco to ensure all team members agreed on the specifics of the project and understood their role to enable its success.

A lean awareness session introduced employees to basic principles and practices of process improvement and various lean tools. A cross-functional team conducted current state value stream mapping of the mold making process, detailing value added as well as non-value added activities.

Using the current state value stream map and applying lean guidelines, the team identified areas for improvements along with potential solutions. They also

developed a future state value stream map based on a prioritized set of their solutions.

Results

Working with CONNSTEP, the Wepco team prepared a deployment plan designed to create the future state, initiate the implementation of identified short term solutions, track and collect additional data for longer term actions. A presentation was made to Wepco Plastics management to ensure alignment with their objectives and obtain approval of the plan.

With the support of Wepco’s management team, lean principles were applied, and value stream mapping guided the simplification of processes and adoption of new procedures to decrease its overall lead time from eight weeks to four weeks per average order.

A visual scheduling board was implemented to map out the workflow of each job from start to finish, along with standard work and workplace organization. This helped lead to higher value of work, increased sales, more molds, and new customers.



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CONNSTEP, Inc. is a consulting firm strategically helping companies in Connecticut to grow their businesses and improve operational methodologies, leading to increased profitability, improved efficiencies, and creating sustainable competitive advantages in the marketplace.

