

BAE Systems Cheshire Facility Lean Success Started with CL&P PRIME Funding

BAE Systems Electronics and Integrated Solutions, headquartered in Cheshire CT, is a highly innovative aerospace and defense company that designs and produces gyros for missiles, tanks, helicopters, and planes (four major defense platforms).

BAE has been learning and implementing the Toyota Production System (TPS), or more commonly referred to as Lean manufacturing in the U.S., over the last 8 months through Kaizen Team Events with assistance from the Northeast Utilities PRIME Program, administered by Connecticut Light & Power (CL&P). The PRIME Program will pay up to 100% of the cost of Lean Manufacturing Kaizen events; the objectives of these programs are to produce measurable and sustainable process improvements that will enhance growth opportunities for CL&P customers through world - class productivity. The results at BAE through their Kaizen events are very impressive. Kaizen is a Japanese word for "continuous improvement" and Kaizen events are the cornerstone of the Toyota Production System success.

Wayne Demmons, Director of Manufacturing, was fully committed to having the organization learn about TPS and Lean, and had the vision for changing the culture that would engage the employees and empower them. Wayne also had the fortitude to "stay the course" this time with Lean, as they have attempted Lean before without it sticking. Wayne credits his staff for providing unwavering support to each of the CL&P PRIME Kaizen teams, and credits them for taking ownership in learning and applying the Lean processes and tools.

BAE started the Lean events in August 2007 under the guidance of Leanovations, LLC a Lean Consulting Company from Plainville, CT. where the focus was on creating new capacity to meet growth opportunities, reduce inventory, shorten cycle times and improve quality.

"Changing our culture where we want to engage and empower our employees in continuous improvement through Kaizen events was a top objective for 2007" States Wayne Demmons, "Without a doubt, if it was not for Leanovations philosophy that Lean starts with the people first then the tools, we would not be enjoying the Lean journey we are on. Driven by our early success, full management commitment and little constant-gentle-pressure from Leanovations, we are well on our way with our objectives".

Applying the Lean discipline of Takt Time (the customer drum beat), Standard Work (operator walk patterns), and creating stability and level scheduling through a Kanban (an inventory pull system) were three very important tools of Lean and the Toyota Production System that BAE quickly adopted. Learning and applying these tools provided increased output, created new capacity to meet growth opportunities and reduced inventory drastically. For example during the first event in August 2007, the Kaizen team event increased production by 22% in the area of focus, in September; the Kaizen team event established a Kanban pull system that reduced work in process inventory by 50% in another department. The November event reduced cycle time by 73% and the December team reduced salvage inventory by 80% in their departments.

John Della Lana, Manager of Performance Excellence at BAE has been critical at keeping the Lean process and cultural changes going after each event, working closely with each team to complete any follow-up items required. “Although lean has been around for decades, our business has jumped into and out of lean often, but we have learned this time that to truly change habits and culture, you need a consistent and pervasive influence that penetrates the organization at all levels and Leanovations has delivered on this”. States John, “and gave us an opportunity to establish a strong foundation for success, as the results gained from each “Kaizen Event” have transformed the most skeptical of our employees, and have fueled a passion to outdo the preceding teams”.

The Northeast Utilities PRIME Program, administered by CL&P, will pay up to 100% of the cost of Lean Manufacturing Kaizen events, led by certified consulting companies such as Leanovations, for CL&P manufacturing customers who qualify. Manufacturers may be eligible for up to six (6) funded events. Anyone interested in learning more about the PRIME Program should visit Leanovations website at www.leanovations.com or email at info@leanovations.com.

For any additional questions, please feel free to contact:

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