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St. Louis Tannery Utilizes "Lean Enterprise" Principles To Achieve Continuous Manufacturing Improvement

"We have introduced the principles of "Lean Enterprise" in our company because we understand that it's important for everyone in our organization to look for opportunities to improve our processes, eliminate waste, and include all levels of personnel in the process," said Shep Hermann, president of Hermann Oak Leather, a 125+ year-old St. Louis tannery that is implementing an extensive manufacturing process improvement program.

Hermann Oak Leather Employee Completes Six Sigma Course

Rob Harvey, Herman Oak Leather Lean Coordinator, has successfully completed a Missouri Enterprise Six Sigma Greenbelt training program, with Project Manager Steve Andriano.

Six Sigma is a systematic, fact-based problem solving methodology that uses the DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control) process to resolve problems that were previously considered unsolvable.

To satisfy the training program requirements, Mr. Harvey participated in ten days of intensive classroom work and successfully completed an in-plant project. The training program that Harvey completed is designed to prepare participants for the ASQ certification examination.

Hermann Oak Leather was founded in 1881 and is one of the nation's oldest leather tanning and manufacturing operations. It provides prime grade tanned steer hides used primarily in the manufacture of saddles, bridles, holsters, belts and pet products. In recent years, the company has added several new product lines including motorcycle and luggage leathers.

Missouri Enterprise began working with the company last summer and has provided Hermann Oak Leather with both staff training and hands-on implementation support for the last six months.

In the first phase of the program, Missouri Enterprise provided the company a one-day Introduction to Lean Enterprise seminar. This introduced management and key employees to "Lean" tools and techniques and taught how to apply them to reduce costs, lead-times and inventory, while improving organization and the flow of information and material through the facility.

Following that, Missouri Enterprise provided a series of shorter "Lean" training sessions for all production employees. This equipped the entire company to begin the process of becoming part of a collaborative culture committed to continuous improvement and the elimination of waste.

After the training sessions, Missouri Enterprise held a Value Stream Mapping event. Value Stream Maps are graphic representations of all the activities, both value added and non-value added that make up the company's operation. The future state map generated is a guide to the projects that can be undertaken to improve the company's processes and increase productivity.

Based on the information derived from the Value Stream Mapping process, the company's "Lean" team, led by Tannery Supervisor Geza Hauser and Lean Coordinator Rob Harvey, is conducting a series of Kaizen events to address specific non-value added activities. Kaizen events are concentrated and highly focused on a specific area of the operation.

The company expects its continuous improvement efforts to result in more than \$1 million in increased sales and cost savings.

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Missouri Enterprise Previews Spring 2008 Professional Development Seminar Series

The Missouri Enterprise Spring 2008 Professional Development Seminar Series will offer opportunities to improve performance in two areas regularly identified by Missouri manufacturers as "challenges."

The first area, human resource management, will focus on Staff Development/Training and Team Building and will introduce Training Within Industry (TWI). This is a dynamic "train-the-trainer" program for supervisors, team leaders or anyone who directs the work of others.

TWI consists of three standardized programs that cover the essential skills needed by all supervisors and team leaders, regardless of their industries. These are skill in instruction; improving methods; and leading.

To help supervisors and team leaders develop these skills, TWI incorporates a four-step process, preparation, presentation, application and testing in each of three modules.

Module One - Job Instruction (JI)

Module Two - Job Method (JM)

Module Three - Job Relations (JR)

The second area, Manufacturing Process Improvement, will present Lean Accounting, a way to realign the activities of a Lean plant floor with the needs of the accounting department and to enable companies to effectively implement Lean decision-making across its entire operation.

During the Lean Accounting seminar, participants will see how to improve their ability to identify true costs, make the right decisions for continuous improvement, all in order to improve profitability.

The series will begin in early March and run through May, with seminars tentatively scheduled for St. Louis, Kansas City, Hannibal, Cape Girardeau, Sedalia and Lebanon.

A complete schedule, including specific times, places and full course descriptions will be posted soon on the Missouri Enterprise Web Site at www.missourienterprise.org.

Curtis Lopez, Missouri Enterprise Project Manager

Curtis Lopez has more than 15 years industry experience in quality management, strategic planning, quality systems auditing as well as quality systems training and development.



As a quality systems specialist, Curtis has led audit teams utilizing ISO 9001/AS 9100/Automotive QS/TS requirements, co-pioneered the documentation, development and facilitation of their ISO 9001 quality system registration. He has trained, led, facilitated and coordinated the implementation of quality teams and statistical analysis associated with successful ISO/Aerospace/Automotive execution.

Curtis has a Bachelor of Science degree in Total Quality Management, with an emphasis in Manufacturing Management, cum laude, from Newman University in Wichita, KS.

He is senior member of the American Society for Quality (ASQ), a certified Zenger Miller instructor, a certified "Quality System Lead Auditor and has completed the ISO 9000 Assessor/Lead Assessor examination.

The Staff and Board of Directors of
Missouri Enterprise
Wish You A Safe and Happy
Holiday Season and a
Prosperous New Year!