

06/13/2007

## **Electronics company relies on lean manufacturing to compete globally**

**By: Scott Whipple , Herald staff**

**NEW BRITAIN - Two years ago, foreign competition was cutting into Peter Paul Electronics Co. Peter Paul, a nonunion manufacturer of solenoid valves with a reputation for excellence, had supplied the aerospace and defense industry for decades. Yet, like other Connecticut aerospace manufacturers, the 60-year-old family firm was feeling the squeeze of global competition.**

A \$500,000 Commerce, State and Justice grant enabled Peter Paul to bring in Central Connecticut State University's Institute for Technology and Business Development's Rick Mullins and Tom Lorenzetti. Mullins and Lorenzetti introduced the company to the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology Inc., and its Center for Manufacturing Supply Chain Integration program.

"ADI helped get us to where we are today," Operations Manager Michael Mangiafico said.

That and lean manufacturing.

Lean has been defined as a process of eliminating wasteful or nonvalue-added activities while continuously improving the process to achieve enhance value.

Since Peter Paul implemented lean manufacturing, the company, with plants in New Britain and Puerto Rico, has conducted kaizen events through its manufacturing, front office and supplier operations.

Kaizen events - one aspect of lean - are actions in which output is intended to be an improvement to an existing process, such as setup time in one workstation that dropped to 66 minutes from 180. To date, six lean projects conducted with ADI funding assistance have improved lead times by 38 percent, reduced setup times by 39 percent and cut rejects by 40 percent.

Mangiafico says the lean process has even been extended to ongoing, statistical analysis of vendor relationships.

"We have enacted similar, stringent statistical controls for our vendors to ensure timely delivery of critical materials and components," he said.

On the shop floor, Peter Paul employees welcomed the opportunity to become more self-sufficient.

"They made it happen themselves," said Alan Cordner, manufacturing manager.

Some workers assumed the introduction of lean inevitably results in job loss. At Peter Paul, lean had the opposite effect: 20 more jobs were created. With on-time, better quality products, customers were happier. There is less production waiting time; one employee no longer watches while another works.

Bob Danielewicz has been with Peter Paul 26 years.

"I've never been as efficient as I am right now," he said. "Lean Manufacturing is like a recipe for working smarter."

Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology has started using that recipe for companies outside the aerospace industry.

"We hope to roll out similar programs with other Connecticut manufacturers," said CAT Director Robert Torrani. "This would include automotive and medical devices, not just the defense industry."

Torrani insists military devices are staying in the United States, rather than being offshored to China.

"A lot of Pratt & Whitney work is military engines," he said. "That's still in the Connecticut supply chain."

Scott Whipple can be reached at [swhipple@newbritainherald.com](mailto:swhipple@newbritainherald.com) or by calling (860) 225-4601, ext. 319.

## Box with story

Advertisement  
Advertisement

### ADI at a glance ...

In November 2005, Gov. M. Jodi Rell invited Connecticut aerospace and defense manufacturers to take advantage of an Aerospace & Defense Initiative, a "valuable program that will make your company more competitive," she wrote.

The State of Connecticut, through the Department of Economic and Community Development, makes available \$2 million to assist companies in the introduction or continuation of lean manufacturing techniques within their organizations. Companies can receive 50 percent reimbursement of the cost for an external service provider or \$5,000 per lean project conducted by an internal expert.

*©The Herald 2007*