



IVAN GELIC
PLANT MANAGER
AERO INDUSTRIES INC.

“The Aero-Purdue partnership has been key to educating our employees to think differently and to see how we can be more efficient in getting the job done with their full participation in the process. The end result is a very fluid and ongoing partnership — one that continues to bring great value to Aero and our team members.”

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP AERO INDUSTRIES INC., INDIANAPOLIS



AERO INDUSTRIES TURNS TO PURDUE TO IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE PROCESS IMPROVEMENT TOOLS

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DAVE BOYD
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
AERO INDUSTRIES INC.

INDIANAPOLIS MANUFACTURER TAPS PURDUE TO TAKE ITS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS TO NEXT LEVEL

Change is essential for ensuring manufacturers compete and win in the global marketplace. But lasting, sustainable change doesn't come easy. And sometimes it can take more than one pass. Ask Aero Industries Inc.

The Indianapolis-based leader of manufactured tarp systems and trailer accessory systems faced higher costs from its commitment to innovation, capacity issues from increasing sales and development, and an ongoing struggle to find reliable, semi-skilled employees in the region.

"The challenge for companies like Aero is: How do you meet your daily business challenges and at the same time create a culture of continuous improvement. For us, the answer was simple — Purdue TAP," says Dave Boyd, president and chief operating officer at Aero.

As in Purdue's Technical Assistance Program (TAP). Again.

Six years ago, Aero first contacted Purdue for help in training employees in Lean manufacturing and process improvement principles. While Aero benefited from that initial connection, company officials wanted deeper, sustainable change to create a factory-wide culture among its 200-plus employees, change that focused on efficiency, innovation and process improvement.

This time, Aero has a different blueprint for real change. In addition to ongoing training, Purdue TAP staffer Art Thomas spends a day every other week working alongside the Aero lead team. Thomas also is a key member of a cross-functional continuous improvement team focused on change.

TAP senior industry advisor Dietra Rosenkoetter had worked closely with the Aero-Purdue project, developing a "keen understanding of the company's strengths and opportunities," and has a "great feel for Aero's people and culture," Boyd says.

"A key to this partnership is teamwork and compatibility between Aero and Purdue TAP," says Aero plant manager Ivan Gelic. "The Aero team is making great strides and having a significant impact by reducing

waste, increasing capacity and eliminating stress and chaos. Today, it is difficult to tell where Purdue TAP ends and Aero Industries starts."

Benefiting from the Purdue partnership, Aero was able to:

- Increase product-line sales revenue by over 15%.
- Reduce order processing time by 25%.
- Eliminate reworks and post-product inspections by 20%.
- Eliminate production bottlenecks through process improvement, increasing weekly capacity for one product line by 33%.
- Create multiple new jobs while maintaining labor costs as a percentage of sales revenue.

"This partnership has really been terrific for the company. It brings an entirely new perspective on our processes and how we can continually improve the way we get things done," says Monica Kidwell, quality systems manager for Aero and a Purdue Organizational Leadership graduate.

A third-generation, family-owned business founded in Indianapolis in 1944, Aero initially made tarpaulins but expanded its product line to become a leader in development of cargo protection accessories for the transportation industry.

Aero is an industry leader and innovator, introducing the first aluminum stake Side Kit in the 1960s and the first rolling tarp system, the Conestoga, in the 1980s. With over 70 patents, Aero is committed to being successful in an ultra-competitive environment, distinguishing itself by providing the industry's best products, service and people.

"Aero Industries continues to be blessed with significant growth in a very competitive industry," Boyd says. "While the foundation to our success remains great people and great products, the stark reality is that we need to continue to become more efficient to compete successfully in today's global marketplace."



ABOUT TAP/MEP

Purdue's Technical Assistance Program (TAP) provides high-value solutions that help Indiana businesses maximize their success by increasing profits, reducing costs and implementing growth systems. The Purdue Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), a business unit of Purdue TAP, serves manufacturers throughout the state of Indiana by implementing continuous improvement principles in the areas of productivity, growth and technology. Purdue MEP has helped businesses collectively achieve over \$1 billion of economic impact since 2005.

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