

MEP SUCCESS STORIES



Left: Jacob Bloss, APC's Director of Operations
Right: Steve Hornett, Chief Operations Officer

STEVE HORNETT CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER AUTOMATIC POOL COVERS

"Growth for Automatic Pool Covers over the past 35 years was generated by great service, a quality mindset and market-leading products. Our people have been driving those standards over the years, and we knew that through Purdue's assistance, Lean manufacturing could unleash even more improvement and creativity in our employees."

PURDUE
UNIVERSITY

MANUFACTURING
EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP AUTOMATIC POOL COVERS INC., WESTFIELD, INDIANA



PURDUE-LED TRAINING PROVES ESSENTIAL FOR GROWTH-MINDED AUTOMATIC POOL COVERS

**"PURDUE MEP HAS BEEN A KEY PARTNER IN
OUR LEAN MANUFACTURING JOURNEY."**

MIKE SHEBEK
PRESIDENT
AUTOMATIC POOL COVERS

WITH PURDUE'S ASSISTANCE, AUTOMATIC POOL COVERS REINVESTS IN EMPLOYEES TO GROW ITS MANUFACTURING

Automatic Pool Covers Inc. (APC) had been a leading distributor of swimming pool cover materials for nearly 25 years.

A decision in 2003 to develop and manufacture its own automatic pool cover is a primary reason why the Westfield, Indiana-based company is an industry leader today — and growing its revenues by double-digit levels each year.

But sitting still was not a part of the long-term plans for APC and its 46 full-time employees.

So the company turned to Purdue University's Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) for developing a formal Lean manufacturing program focused on identifying and eliminating waste and improving production quality.

The partnership and the \$500,000 investment in related restructuring have had a significant and immediate impact.

"Although we have been manufacturing products for over 10 years, since we contracted with the MEP program, we've reduced our manufacturing footprint, reduced process handoffs, improved productivity and — most significantly — reduced our manufacturing lead time by 68%," says APC President Mike Shebek. "Purdue MEP has been a key partner in our Lean manufacturing journey."

Other results have been just as impressive from the APC-Purdue partnership:

- Revenues have risen over 10% the past year, while overtime was cut by 23%.
- 72% reduction in shipping-to-invoice timing.
- 20% reduction in floor space utilization.
- Process hand-offs reduced by more than half.

In its 10 years as a manufacturer, APC has focused on developing an automatic pool cover system that gives pool owners a solar, winter and most importantly, a safety cover — all in one. With its product, pool chemicals last twice as long, while water evaporation, heating costs and pool-cleaning time are reduced.

Working with MEP's advanced manufacturing specialists, APC participated in two Lean 101 sessions in the fall of 2012, giving all full-time employees an introduction to Lean manufacturing principles.

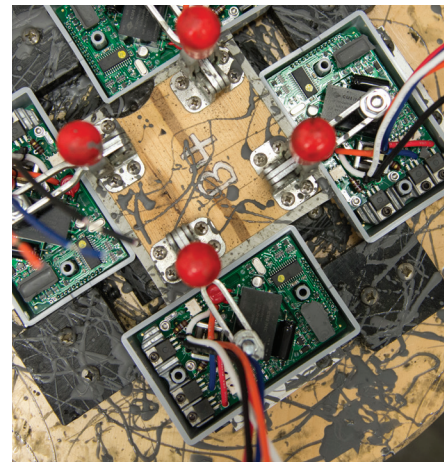
A two-day Value Stream Mapping (VSM) session, led by MEP, featured hands-on, "current state" mapping of APC's 365-product offering, revealing potential waste in its order flow from call to cash. The second day covered a critical review of the current state and generation of solutions supporting a better "Future State" map.

APC also held 5S training and implementation, a "kaizen" session on plant layout for continuous improvement and biweekly Lean consulting with MEP to assist with next steps for VSM Future State actions.

Jacob Bloss, APC's director of operations, attended Purdue MEP's Lean practitioner certification courses, bringing that knowledge back to the company.

"Jacob became the foundation for our Lean efforts," Shebek says. "This effort doesn't fly without someone in house to lead our efforts, to be a champion of Lean with the knowledge of what we're trying to accomplish."

For Bloss, who has been with APC for 12 years, the Purdue partnership has been life-changing. "It has changed everything we do. And it has opened new doors for me, giving me a new set of tools to grow professionally and to improve APC's manufacturing processes," he says.



ABOUT MEP

Purdue MEP provides high-value solutions that help Indiana businesses maximize their success by increasing profits, reducing costs, and implementing growth systems. Our organization serves more than 500 companies annually by implementing continuous improvement principles in the areas of productivity, growth, and technology. Purdue MEP has helped our clients collectively achieve over \$1.7 billion of economic impact in Indiana since 2005.

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