

MEP SUCCESS STORIES



STEVE LEHMAN
PRESIDENT,
SMITH BROTHERS
FURNITURE

“Since we are getting paid for a majority of the scrap materials we recycle, we are now making money rather than paying to have the waste hauled away. By embracing the Lean concepts taught to us by Purdue, we are saving money and looking at things in a more sustainable way. It’s definitely a win-win situation.”

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

SMITH BROTHERS FURNITURE, BERNE, IND.



“WE RECYCLED 161 TONS OF SOLID WASTE IN 2010, EQUAL TO 322,000 POUNDS OF PRODUCT. AN AVERAGE SOFA WEIGHS AROUND 160 POUNDS. SO IN ESSENCE, WE RECYCLED 2,012 SOFAS.”

MELISSA FEY
SUSTAINABILITY FACILITATOR,
SMITH BROTHERS FURNITURE

PURDUE
UNIVERSITY®

Manufacturing
Extension Partnership

Pictured: Delbert Schwartz

PURDUE'S GREEN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM CREATES A WIN-WIN FOR INDIANA FURNITURE MAKER

Smith Brothers of Berne Inc. has built a reputation in crafting high-quality and stylish furniture with nearly 275 employees and buyers in more than 20 states and Canada.

The company manufactures fine residential furniture using advanced manufacturing techniques and state-of-the-art equipment. The style: traditional American with a subtle, modern flair.

In each year since 1976, with the exception of 2001, the Indiana furniture maker has been more successful than the year before. In recent years, however, the company has been plagued with escalating energy and waste costs.

To address this issue, Smith Brothers partnered with Purdue in early 2009 to examine how to cut costs. Smith Brothers implemented new guidelines. Some were small: a mandate that all lights and equipment should be shut off when not in use. Others were large: creation of a company-wide Sustainability Team. The result: Smith Brothers has managed to save an estimated \$35,000 in the first year.

Purdue's Energy Efficiency & Sustainability unit played a lead role in providing training through its Green Enterprise Development (GreenED) program. Smith Brothers' accomplishments in efficiently cutting energy and waste have been numerous and significant:

- Reduced solid waste sent to a landfill by 40% by recycling products such as cotton, fiber, plastic and paper.

- Saved an estimated \$15,000 per year in electricity costs by purchasing an ultrasonic air leak detector and implementing a compressed air leak detection and repair program.
- Created a "Green Team" tasked with implementing environmentally friendly projects such as installing photo/heat sensors to automatically turn off lights in restrooms and cafeterias, and establishing new energy management policies.
- Improved evaluation of manufacturing process efficiency by developing energy and waste intensity indices (cost of energy and waste per unit of production).
- Reduced heating and cooling costs by venting waste heat from production through the roof.

"With the help of Purdue's Green Enterprise Development Program, we learned how to package our energy and waste costs into a single measurement tool. Now, when we develop a new chair or sofa, we examine how to utilize less material for making a new piece of furniture. Many of our customers are impressed that our company is making such a commitment to improve the environment."

— **Melissa Fey, Sustainability Facilitator,
Smith Brothers Furniture**

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 \$2 billion in economic impact in Indiana since 2005.

CONTACT US:

PURDUE MEP: WWW.MEP.PURDUE.EDU / 800-877-5182

SMITH BROTHERS: SMITHBROTHERSFURNITURE.COM

