



Success Story: Addresses of Distinction

Addressing a Culture to Create Employee Empowerment

Ten years ago, two brothers, one in engineering school and one working in corporate IT at a large manufacturing company, began talking more seriously about a childhood dream – going into business together.

A year later, Reinhardt and Thomas Cyphers created a business in Atlanta to fulfill a niche market around high end mailboxes and street signs for upscale communities. In the first year, their business, Addresses of Distinction, grew from two to five employees.

Today, the team of 35 thrives around a “P.R.O. Culture,” an environment based on the attributes of being Positive, Reliable, and forming a sense of Ownership among its employees. But the exponential growth of company posed some new challenges for the Cyphers brothers.



Since beginning work with the GaMEP, Addresses of Distinction has:

- Made strategic decisions to update their plant floor four times in the last five years to account for growth.
- Created a process to easily share information from the time an order comes in to the time it is shipped.
- Automated their quoting system, reducing time to get quotes to clients on complex products from a full day to an hour.
- Created a culture of ownership and accountability, allowing for employees to work smarter.
- Grown business through increased orders, new customers, product development, and acquiring additional companies.

»» Situation

As the company experienced large-scale growth, due to both an increase in orders as well as the acquisition of two other companies, employees had to work longer hours just to keep up with the demand. Reinhardt and Thomas knew it was imperative to continuously review their processes, plant layout, and training techniques to accommodate growth. Thomas said, "We wanted to bring in outside help that had experience working on a plant floor. By doing so, we were making a statement that we were committed to investing in our team and the future of our business." Through an introduction from a neighboring manufacturing company, they first met with the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (GaMEP) at Georgia Tech five years ago. Since then the owners and team of Addresses of Distinction have been working closely with Ed Murphy and Tom Sammon, project managers at GaMEP.

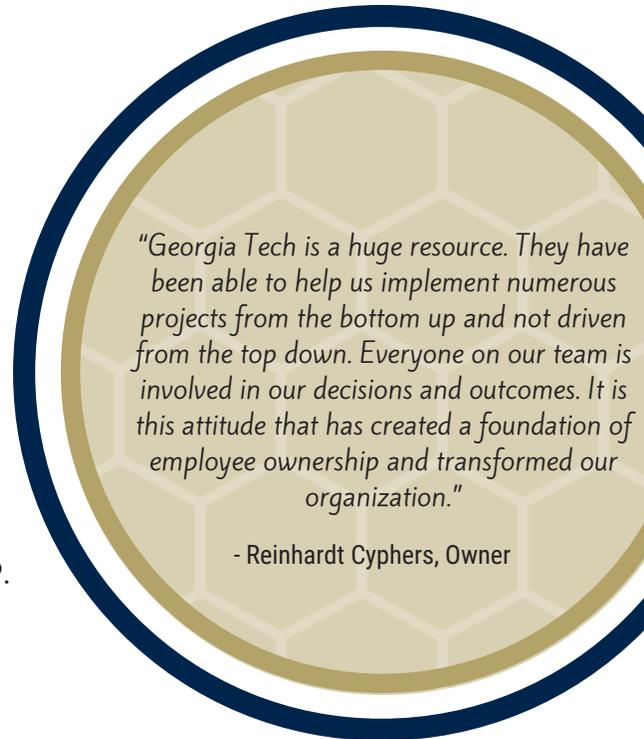
»» Solution

Four times over the past five years, Reinhardt and Thomas have worked with GaMEP to drastically transform their plant layout. As their company has grown each year, their levels of inventory and needs have changed. Each time the GaMEP conducted a 5S, or workplace organization, project to free up space within the facility. Plans were then created to accommodate the growth, including purchasing new equipment such as pallets, flow racks, and work tables, and evaluating the placement and organization of all equipment, inventory, and the assembly process. By revitalizing space each year, the company is able to create an environment within the existing facility footprint that can handle the projected volume of orders for the upcoming year.

In addition, through a careful work flow analysis, the team discovered that each time an order is processed, it touches five people, and a need to improve communications between these people was recognized. The GaMEP worked with Addresses of Distinction to conduct a value stream map. By doing so, they were able to map out the process from the time an order comes into the system to when it is shipped. To generate visibility, streamline the passing of information, and to become more efficient, they developed a communication system utilizing cloud-based information to create a shared view of work in process.

The GaMEP team also worked with the team at Addresses of Distinction to restructure their quoting process. On complex orders, it was taking a full day to quote a complete order. Individuals had to go to multiple people and locations to obtain information, and the fixed and variable cost for each part was hard to acquire, understand, and calculate. By having each component's costs readily accessible and automating their quoting system, the brothers were able to reduce the lead time to get a complex quote back to a client from a day to an hour. Upon receipt of the order, they were also able to use the same tool to simultaneously drive the production "pick list," resulting in saving valuable operations time.

Based on their success, Murphy encouraged Reinhardt and Thomas to begin educating other companies on the philosophies, management style, and P.R.O. culture of Addresses of Distinction. In the past two months alone, the brothers have given five presentations to other manufacturing companies.



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