



Success Story: Wesley International

Pallet Jack Manufacturer Organically Produces Change

In the early 1960's, Bob Fisher's father bought Wesley International out of bankruptcy. In 2009, more than 50 years later, Fisher came out of retirement from a career as an attorney to run the company, a pallet jack and electric utility vehicle manufacturer, in Scottdale, Georgia. He moved from Chairman of the Board to CEO, developing a two year plan to turn the company around after it had suffered a decline in business due to the recession. Since then, Wesley International has enjoyed year over year growth of 25 percent and this past year experienced a staggering 37 percent growth. For a role he intended to initially hold for the short term, Fisher is now committed to Wesley International's long term growth and thrives on the daily challenges he gets to encounter running a successful manufacturing company.



Since beginning their work with the GaMEP, Wesley International has:

- *Eliminated the paper ordering system and implemented an ERP system, saving them 30 percent cost each year associated with order flow and extra handling.*
- *Created accountability for materials and tools within work stations, decreasing misplaced items.*
- *Better configured their pallet jack work area, removing 30 minutes of the time it takes to assemble each pallet truck.*

»» Situation

Fisher attended a luncheon at another manufacturing company in the Atlanta area. It was during this lunch that he was introduced to Lean concepts and the positive impact these tools had on the other company. He stayed after the lunch and talked with the speaker, Kelley Hundt, project manager at the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (GaMEP) at Georgia Tech.

In order to turn the company around, Fisher knew he could not implement a top-down approach. By gaining an outsider's perspective, he believed he would be able to build trust within the organization and organically create change. Fisher and Hundt decided to begin Lean implementation with a process that could have immediate impact and create quick employee buy-in.

»» Solution

They began by looking at the ordering process. The team, which included Fisher, Hundt, employees of Wesley International, and the customer service manager from another manufacturing company, determined that the order process created too much waste. Multiple copies of orders were being printed out and hand delivered to numerous people in both the front office and in production, which was redundant and unnecessary. Fisher and his team decided to implement an ERP system, a business management software system that could better manage the process and flow of the orders. By making the upfront investment, they have created a more streamlined process, eliminated the paper orders, and have saved approximately 30 percent or \$150,000 a year in extra handling costs.

Hundt and Fisher used these results as a catalyst to get the assembly team on board with other improvements such as organizing workstations, generating functionality within the space, and creating accountability. Knowing that multiple people shared workstations and misplaced tools were a problem, the team developed a color coded system, by person and by workstation, for each set of tools. The team also moved all needed material closer to each workstation, helping with material flow. In addition, Fisher and Hundt divided a 40 foot workbench in thirds. By pulling the workbench apart, it helped the staff more easily gain access to the other side of plant.

"Kelley did a great job. She came in as an outside, unbiased party with a fresh set of eyes on our processes. It was inspirational for the team to see a process for change that was not top-down driven. It worked and was impactful because it was organic within the organization."

- Bob Fisher, CEO

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