

Success Story: Northway Industries, Inc., Implements Web-Based Solution with IMC's Assistance

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Northway Industries, Inc. is a privately held company employing 120 people that provides quality contract manufacturing services to a variety of clients.

The company was founded in 1966 and utilizes high-pressure laminates, melamine, vinyl, paper, and wood veneer products to produce cabinets, countertops, work surfaces, fixtures, and more. Operations consist of CNC controlled machining, milling, routing, and banding. Primary markets served include OEM suppliers, retailers, schools, and institutions.

SITUATION

Beginning in 2005, Northway partnered with IMC, a NIST MEP affiliate, to engage in lean and cellular manufacturing consultation and implementation. **The company was re-engineered from a mass-production shop to a mass-customization shop, allowing Northway to be more responsive to its market which needed more small-batch custom orders.**

As a result of the implementation, the company saw an increase in small batch orders and single piece flow orders. This significantly boosted the volume of information necessary to initiate and complete work. It became apparent that Northway's legacy systems were becoming less effective and less accurate with this changing business model.

While the changes implemented during the first IMC project allowed Northway to expand capabilities and machine and fabricate at faster rates, the delays caused by managing an increased volume of critical information were hampering true growth. Northway continued to work with IMC to tackle the new problem and develop an information system that would allow project data to be managed more effectively.

The robust, scalable information system that was developed with IMCs assistance is capable of pulling together details about a wide range of business operations.

SOLUTION

The project began with an objective of creating a web-based project scheduling system. **The initiative soon grew to be a complete information system that linked all aspects of the project and client relationship into one centralized, online location.**

The system includes a project-based scheduling system, contract documents, customer purchase orders, production documents, a materials database, RFID (radio-frequency identification) order tracking, company policy and procedure documents, quality control information, and sales-related communications. The new system allows both employees and customers to log in and see relevant project-specific data.

RESULTS

- \$2 million in increased sales
- \$100,000 in cost savings
- \$75,000 in new investment