

Success Story: Northway Industries Partners with IMC to Enhance Its Lean Manufacturing Culture

written by Lauri Moon | March 3, 2025



Northway Industries, Inc., located in Middleburg, Snyder County, is a privately held company that manufactures plastic laminated panels, tops, parts and kits. Northway's operation consists of CNC controlled cutting, milling, routing and banding operations. The market served is OEM suppliers, retailers, schools and institutions. They are FSC certified and conform with LEED specifications as required. The company has engaged in several small projects focused on sustainability including LED lighting with occupancy sensors, monitoring compressed air systems for leakage and an eco-gate system on their dust containment unit that monitors the RPM of unit motors.

Over the past several years, Northway has been working to instill a corporate culture based on Lean manufacturing concepts. While business has been steady, Northway's leadership recognized potential areas of improvement and decided to start with its order process, from intake to floor. To develop a more effective system in the order process activities, they reached out to the Innovative Manufacturers' Center (IMC) to assist them in further developing this initiative.

After meeting with the Northway team, it was determined that a continuous improvement program based on Lean manufacturing principles called *Winning Teams* would be the basis for making the desired improvements. This project

empowered employees with the skills and tools needed to identify inefficiencies, streamline workflows and enhance overall operational performance. By focusing on critical areas, such as initial order processing, customer demand interpretation, estimating and materials management, the company would significantly improve its ability to execute and deliver high-quality products with greater speed and precision. In addition, the IMC was able to assist Northway in obtaining a grant through the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Energy & Manufacturing in Appalachia program that reduced their final costs for the project.

The Winning Teams program combined hands-on training with real-world application to develop a stronger culture of continuous improvement. Employees participated in structured problem-solving exercises, gaining both technical expertise and a deeper understanding of the human side of change management. As a result, Northway Industries has seen measurable gains in productivity, reduced waste and optimized resource utilization, further strengthening its ability to meet customer expectations efficiently and sustainably.

The success of this collaboration with the IMC has reinforced Northway's reputation as a forward-thinking manufacturer dedicated to Lean principles and operational excellence. With a more agile and efficient production process, the company is well-positioned for long-term growth and enhanced customer satisfaction. Moving forward, Northway remains committed to sustaining its lean culture, continuously refining its processes and fostering innovation across all levels of the organization.

“ Through the Winning Teams program, we increased throughput in our laminate cleaning/inspection area by 18%, which also shortened the time for us to respond to vendors about defective products and to reorder replacements for those products by an average of 1 day. We also reduced the number of orders going from Sales to Order Entry with missing information by 25%. This reduced the processing time for order entry and throughput of an order through Sales and Order Entry by an average of 2.5 days. In partnering with IMC on the Winning Teams project, we equipped our team members with the skills needed to identify and drive waste out of our process and increase efficiency. By working with IMC, we bridge the gap between industry expertise and workforce readiness, creating a seamless integration of innovation and practical application. This collaboration strengthens our impact,

driving efficiency, quality, and long-term success.”

Steve Wagner, Director of Training & Development

Northway Industries, Inc.