QUALPRO®

case study

Improvements Protect Hundreds of Jobs

"We needed to get everybody involved in making processes better: the operators on the line, the supervisors on the line, and the managers on the line. They had to worry about more than just – as we say – making the donuts. Yeah, they have to worry about making the donuts, no question about that, but they have to make the donuts better every day," says Keith Van Scotter, CEO of Lincoln Paper & Tissue (LP&T).

Van Scotter notes, "We've been in business five years. The Lincoln mill had been in bankruptcy, shut down. We basically put together everything we had, threw it in, and bought the business with $23 million in debt. The only way you create margin is by process improvement: increasing productivity, reducing cost, reducing waste, and making better quality. That's how you stay in business in a heavy manufacturing based environment."

Energy costs sparked a critical need. Erika Jipson, Environmental Engineer, explains, "The lime kiln plays a very important role. It converts calcium carbonate to calcium oxide using heat. We burn No. 6 fuel oil – 4,500 gallons of fuel oil per day. During the early 2000's, the cost of oil started creeping up. In 2008 it reached its all-time high, and that's when we pulled out the toolbox and targeted improvement of the lime kiln."

Jipson goes on to describe the experiment: "It was complete in thirty days. Unlike the tissue and paper mill that can run a recipe in two hours, each of our twenty recipes took twenty-four hours, we're a little slower." Four ideas helped. Jipson notes the success achieved by the idea testing process: "We've decreased our oil consumption in the lime kiln by ten percent and, based on the No. 6 fuel price couple of days ago, that results in a quarter million dollars for the company."

Ralph Lichtenberg, Product Development Manager, discusses another production issue involving tissue quality: "We use a chemical for helping to develop dry strength and a separate chemical for developing wet strength. Both of them took a dramatic price increase. We used the testing process again to address chemical costs." The results? "After we ran the series of tests, we ended up not only erasing the effect of the chemical price increase but reducing our cost beyond. So we ended up improving our cost by thirty-eight percent."

QualPro Vice President Art Hammer, who has helped the Lincoln mill use the MVT® process for several years added, "These successes are just a sample of the many projects that LP&T has executed to improve their quality, costs, and competitiveness. It is very gratifying to watch the MVT® process protect hundreds of jobs in Lincoln, Maine."

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