

# Success in Operations

*Contract cable and wire harness manufacturer leverages the power of lean to launch an organization wide efficiency transformation*

**ADVANTAGE COMPONENTS, INC.**



60 Employees



Joliet, Illinois



[www.aciwires.com](http://www.aciwires.com)

## SITUATION

In early 2014, Advantage Components, Inc. (ACi) began to see exponential growth in sales and subsequent production. But with space constrained in their current facility, the company knew it was time to make room in the existing facility or expand beyond their four walls. Kevin Sullivan, Tim Kucera and Mike Burman, ACi leadership, had previous experience working with the principles of lean manufacturing and were interested in committing to increasing efficiencies in the current space before committing to a new facility. Through a quick online search of experts in the field of lean, ACi discovered IMEC.

## SOLUTION

For ACi leadership, it was imperative they lay a strong foundation in lean manufacturing with their entire team. By kicking off with a Lean 101 and following the core education with several kaizen events, SMED training, inventory, and facility layout activities, ACi has realized a tremendous initial increase in productivity amongst staff and in their levels of manufacturing output. "Moving through the implementation activities with IMEC has been a huge help," said Mike Burman, Vice President of Sales and Engineering ACi. "One of the best things about IMEC and their expertise is that they are hands on. Everyone that has been onsite at our facility has dug in and gotten involved – they didn't just write a report. They wanted to move machines on the spot and make immediate improvements. This really resonated with our team and encouraged them to become more involved in the projects."

As efficiencies and capacity increased and the ACi customer base continued to grow and change, management knew they needed to stop and assess their focus; they needed to recognize where their strengths lie. This is where the organization transitioned the efficiency improvements from primarily on the shop floor to the office. Through an 80/20 business optimization initiative, ACi refocused their customer base; understanding where customers are in the sales funnel and who they truly want to be working with. This renewed effort shifted sales greatly and helped ACi realize a next year sales growth of 19.6% and put them on pace for a 20% increase in the current year.

To continue the success in sales and help ensure the organization was improving in all aspects of the business, IMEC worked with the ACi team to launch a new website and conduct an employee engagement survey. "The engagement review was an interesting effort for us," said Burman. "We knew we were a family-friendly, good place to work, but the survey really helped us confirm what we needed to know to advance our efforts in staff training and professional development." Since the survey, ACi has offered employees additional training in soldering, SMED, time studies, and cell layout. Burman added "overall, we have seen a tremendous benefit in working with IMEC. Employees have respect for each other, for the IMEC staff, and for continuous improvement, and they're making incremental improvements daily. The growth and direction of the company is more focused on who we are working with (customers) and everyone doing a great job."

## RESULTS

- Increased sales by \$2 million through added capacity realized through lean manufacturing
- Retained a \$1.2 million key customer nearly lost to competition in Mexico, and a \$100k annual customer through quality, safety, and delivery improvements
- Implemented 2-second improvements with staff across the organization to continue focusing on lean daily

“ We always look forward to beginning another project with IMEC. They never let us bite off more than we can chew while helping us realize even minor improvements as quickly as possible. I would never hesitate to recommend IMEC to other manufacturers. ”

- Mike Burman, Vice President



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