

HOLLISTER-WHITNEY'S LEAN JOURNEY IN QUINCY BUILT A CULTURE OF IMPROVEMENT

The turning point on the shop floor at Hollister-Whitney Elevator Corp. in Quincy didn't begin with a new machine, a new product line, or even a major capital investment.

It began with two simple questions.

For years, when problems surfaced, the focus was on how quickly they could be fixed. Over time, that approach began to change. Leaders and employees started asking different questions: *Why did the problem exist in the first place? And, what would happen if everyone in the plant took ownership of solving it?*

That shift in thinking sparked a transformation that reshaped how the company operates today. Working with the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC), Hollister-Whitney introduced Lean process improvements that broke down long-standing operational silos, reorganized workflows, and encouraged employees throughout the facility to identify opportunities for improvement.

The results went far beyond efficiency gains. They created a model that Hollister-Whitney's parent company, Vantage Elevator Solutions, is now applying to facilities across the country.

"We realized that many processes had just evolved over time. Nobody stepped back to ask if this was still the best way to do it," said Ed Trone, vice president and general manager at Hollister-Whitney.

BREAKING DOWN SILOS

When Hollister-Whitney began working with IMEC, the company was already staffed with experienced employees and skilled teams. "Like a lot of companies, we had silos," Trone said. "If it was a safety problem, that was the safety department. If it was a quality problem, that was quality. Engineering problems went to engineering."

The challenge was helping employees see that every part of the production process is connected.

"One of the biggest things IMEC helped us understand is that we all own the entire value stream," Trone said. "Yes, everyone has their piece, but at the end of the day we're all responsible for getting that order from the customer and shipping it out the door on time and correct."

That perspective became clearer when teams began mapping their production processes with IMEC guidance.

Through value stream mapping exercises, employees could visualize how work moved from order entry to engineering to production to shipping.

"For the first time, people could see exactly how their work affected the next step," Trone said. "And they realized, 'If I'm the process before you, you're my customer.'"



HOLLISTER-WHITNEY ELEVATES A TEAM CULTURE

One goal of the *Made in My Hometown* series is to highlight manufacturers creating lasting value for both their organizations and their communities. Hollister-Whitney (Vantage) exemplifies this commitment through its people-centered approach to continuous improvement.

The company has successfully used lean principles to engage team members at every level in problem-solving and decision-making. By helping employees understand what they do and why they do it, Hollister-Whitney has fostered a culture where everyone sees their role in serving customers and how they drive success. This inclusive approach strengthens operations, encourages innovation, and creates a workforce invested in the company's future.

The Hollister-Whitney story demonstrates that continuous improvement is most effective when everyone has a voice - and a clear connection to a company's mission.

Regards,

Mary Hallock
IMEC
Director of Special Initiatives

FROM RESISTANCE TO ENGAGEMENT

Like most operational transformations, the early stages required patience. "Human beings are not fans of change," Trone said with a laugh.

Initial reactions ranged from skepticism to outright resistance, particularly among employees who had spent decades mastering their craft.

But that changed once teams began seeing the results firsthand.

The Lean tool 5S workplace organization became one of the first breakthroughs.

"We had some very skilled workers, but their areas weren't organized," Trone said. "They were spending time hunting for tools or parts." Once those workspaces were reorganized, something unexpected happened.

"After we finished a couple areas, we had employees coming to us saying, 'When are you coming to my area? I want the same thing over here,'" Trone said.

The shift from resistance to participation marked a critical moment in the company's Lean journey.

"The way you win the shop floor over," he said, "is doing what you say you're going to do."

A CULTURE SHIFT ON THE SHOP FLOOR

For IMEC Regional Manager Steve Sandercock, the cultural shift at Hollister-Whitney represents the real power of Lean.

"Lean tools are important," Sandercock said, "but what really matters is building a culture where employees feel responsible for improving the process."

At the Quincy plant, that mindset now drives daily operations.

Employees submit ideas through a continuous improvement suggestion board. Management reviews them several times each week and assigns teams to evaluate ideas and implement changes.

"We're seeing employees stop us in the hallway with ideas," Trone said. "Instead of us going out looking for things to fix, they're bringing opportunities to us."

One recent suggestion involved a workstation where employees were manually guiding a 60-pound component into position because a hoist didn't quite reach the work area.

BRINGING LEAN MODEL TO PLANTS NATIONWIDE

The success of Lean transformation at Hollister-Whitney's Quincy manufacturing plant didn't just stay in Illinois.

Recognizing the strength of the model developed with Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC), Hollister-Whitney's parent company Vantage Elevator Solutions began exploring how similar practices could be introduced at plants across its portfolio.

To help lead that effort, the company turned to Jim Floyd, IMEC technical specialist who had been closely involved in Hollister-Whitney's improvement initiatives.

Floyd was asked by Vantage to bring the same structured approach to plants in Sacramento, Calif., and the Bronx, N.Y. — two plants with very different environments and operational challenges.

"What we saw in Quincy was a cultural shift, not just a productivity improvement," said Chris Meyer, Vantage vice president of manufacturing. "People on the floor were identifying problems and solving them in real time. That's when we knew it was something worth expanding to other facilities."

"The goal wasn't to duplicate Quincy exactly," Floyd explained. "Every facility is different. But the principles and how you analyze processes, how you engage employees, how you build continuous improvement translates everywhere."

The work involved helping teams map production flows, identify inefficiencies, and develop systems that make improvement part of everyday operations.

For Vantage leadership, the initiative was about creating consistency across the company's manufacturing network.

"We saw the value of having a common framework for improvement," said Meyer. "When multiple facilities are working from the same principles, it becomes much easier to share best practices and scale success."

It also creates a common language across Vantage plants, Meyer added. "When teams talk about problem solving or process flow, everyone understands the approach. That alignment accelerates improvement."

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"IMEC helped us understand ... that we all own the entire value stream."



"The solution was simple," Trone said. "We moved the workstation three feet."

The improvement eliminated unnecessary lifting and improved safety, which are exactly the kinds of small but meaningful change Lean thinking encourages.

"It was an employee idea," Trone said. "And we fixed it in a couple hours."

LEARNING TO SEE OPPORTUNITIES

According to Sandercock, one of the most powerful outcomes of Lean training is helping teams develop a new perspective on their work.

"We call it 'learning to see,'" he said. "Once people understand how to look at processes differently, they start identifying improvement opportunities everywhere."

That perspective proved especially valuable at Hollister-Whitney.

Employees now routinely conduct short Kaizen events, which are focused improvement efforts designed to implement changes quickly.

"You don't always need a long project plan," Trone said. "Sometimes it's just getting the right people together and saying, 'Let's go fix this today.'"

The success of the Quincy plant soon caught the attention of leadership at Hollister-Whitney's parent company, Vantage Elevator Solutions.

"We saw such great success here," Trone said, "that our leadership team said we need to spread this out to some of our other businesses."

The goal was consistency.

"As it pertains to Hollister-Whitney, over the past several years we've been able to demonstrate real results," Sandercock said. "When leadership begins to see that improvement efforts are delivering measurable outcomes, it builds confidence in the process."



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That consistency is especially valuable for manufacturers headquartered in Illinois that operate plants elsewhere.

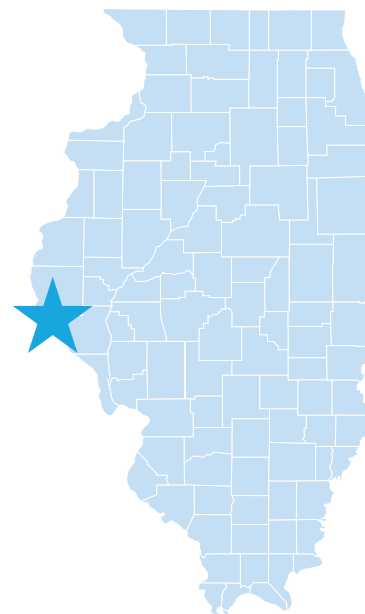
By leveraging IMEC expertise beyond state lines, companies can extend the same training and improvement strategies throughout their operations.

For Floyd, the experience reinforced an important lesson.

"When people see the results firsthand, they buy into the process," he said. "And once that happens, continuous improvement becomes something the entire organization can build on."

HOLLISTER-WHITNEY ELEVATOR CORPORATION

Quincy, IL, USA



That confidence allowed the work in Quincy to expand beyond isolated projects.

"Once people start identifying waste and inefficiencies in their processes, it becomes part of how they operate," Sandercock said. "It's not just a Lean project anymore. It becomes how the company runs."

Sandercock said the Quincy facility also showed how structured problem-solving tools can help manufacturers anticipate issues before they occur. "One of the things we focus on is failure mode and effects analysis," he said. "It's a disciplined way to look at a process or a design and ask, 'Where could this fail? What could go wrong?' If you can identify those failure modes early, you can prevent problems before they ever reach the customer."

Over time, those methods helped the Quincy operation reduce inefficiencies and improve consistency across production.

For Hollister-Whitney, the journey is far from over.

"There's always another opportunity to get better," Trone said. "That's the mindset now. We're always looking for the next improvement."

IMPROVEMENT BEYOND ILLINOIS

"Over the last several years they've done a tremendous job identifying waste and driving cost out of the operation," Sandercock said. "And those improvements didn't just stay in Quincy. They influenced other locations as well."

"If someone walks into our plant in Quincy and then walks into our plant in the Bronx," Trone said, "the continuous improvement process should look the same. We talk the same, we act the same, and we use the same terminology."

What began as a focused effort to improve operations at a single plant has now become a model for facilities across the country.

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