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Graphicast and NH MEP Mold Successful Business Plan
New Techniques Help Company Create Hundreds of Yearly Production Hours

JAFFREY, NH - In manufacturing, the end product is the result of the process that went into putting it together. So if the process in which a product is produced is flawed, then the product itself tends to reflect that process. So it stands to reason that when a process is working and the end product is of the highest quality no changes are necessary, right? Wrong.

Graphicast in Jaffrey is the preeminent company in the field of developing and using graphite mold casting technology to produce precision metal parts for use in products like computers, video imaging equipment and speaker components.

The company reached the top of its field by using the highest quality manufacturing techniques. Graphicast prides itself on rapid turnaround of quality products, but they recognized there is always room for improvement and called upon the New Hampshire Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NH MEP) to help them make changes.

"We brought the NH MEP in with an initial focus of reducing set-up time in the machining process for parts," said Val Zanchuk, Graphicast's president. "They worked with our management and our employees to implement Lean Manufacturing techniques, drastically increasing our run-time and our capacity to machine more product, and decreasing overtime expenses."

Lean Manufacturing is an implementation technique that utilizes simple but effective methods to identify and reduce waste, and inventories, clear shop floors and streamline production processes all with a goal of decreasing costs and increasing productivity.

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"Most manufacturers have long setup times with equipment when switching between different jobs," said Sean Jordan, NH MEP project manager. "The project we conducted with Graphicast is called a Lean Manufacturing Setup Reduction Program and is designed to reduce the long hours spent setting up equipment. We worked with the Graphicast employees to reduce setup time in specific areas by reducing waste and improving their setup process, which cut setup time in half and increased equipment availability to produce more products."

To fund the project, Graphicast applied for a grant from the NH Job Training Program for Economic Growth coordinated by the New Hampshire Community Technical College at Nashua. A similar grant program is currently available from the Workforce Opportunity Council offered through the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development. Companies and not-for-profit organizations are eligible to receive up to \$7,500 for programs designed to enhance the skills of newly hired or current employees. Funds are available for any size employer, require minimum paperwork, and can be used for a variety of training purposes.

Companies interested in the program may access the application materials on the NH Works website (www.nhworks.org) under the "Employer" section, or contact the Workforce Opportunity Council at 603-228-9500 or (info@nhworkforce.org).

Since the project began, Graphicast has increased run time by almost 500 hours over past practices, creating the capacity to machine over \$50,000 of product.

Graphicast and NH MEP recently completed a second training session and have plans to collaborate on additional projects in the future.

NH MEP is an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2,000 manufacturing and business "coaches" whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits and enhanced global competitiveness. NH MEP works in partnership with the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development. For more information on the services NH MEP project

managers provide, contact the Concord office at (603) 226-3200 or go to www.nhmep.org.

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