

**For Immediate Release**  
April 2, 2007

**For More Information Please Contact:**  
Zenagui Brahim, Director of Operations  
603-226-3200

### **THE BEAM TEAM GETS LEAN**

*NH MEP Helps Bensonwood Improve Facility Layout, Increase Production*

**Walpole, NH** – Over 30 years ago, Tedd Benson brought innovation back to homebuilding by combining cutting-edge thinking with craftsmanship. Benson revitalized the traditional home art of timberframing, and today, Bensonwood Homes is a national leader in residential and commercial timberframe buildings.

Despite the success of Bensonwood and the accolades its founder and the “Beam Team” have received throughout the country, their collaborative approach to building homes and building on their skills leads them to seek continued improvement.

“We are constantly striving to be better at what we do and everyone involved must be a part of the process of continuous improvement,” said Benson. “We wanted to bring more lean ideas into our company, so we called the New Hampshire Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NH MEP).”

NH MEP was invited to Bensonwood to tour the shops at their locations and meet the Beam Team. Later, they came back with a comprehensive report identifying areas where there was opportunity for improvement and made suggestions for Lean Manufacturing implementation strategies. The Lean Manufacturing technique uses simple, yet systematic approaches to eliminate waste and reduce manufacturing costs, while increasing productivity.

“Perhaps without realizing it, Bensonwood had already put several lean concepts into practice in the way they encourage teamwork and in their innovative building concepts,” said Linda Ellis, NH MEP project manager. “This corporate culture made them very receptive to any tools that could help them do things better, cheaper and faster.”

Eighty percent of the Beam Team participated in the TimeWise® Lean 102 training, which incorporates classroom presentation with hands-on, job shop simulations to introduce basic lean concepts to the students and illustrate how they are used.

An example of how the Lean Manufacturing training has been incorporated into work at Bensonwood is the tool racks that have been constructed throughout the shop floor. Outlines of each tool are painted on the racks, giving Beam Team members a visual to put the tool back in their designated spot. “We spend 30% less time searching for tools now that they are where we expect them to be”, said Peter Wotewiec, team leader of the timberframe shop.

Another example of Lean in action is the batch size reduction that has occurred in the woodworking and the building systems shops. By performing about five different operations on one door at a time, woodworkers were able to eliminate significant handling time.

“Producing one of our custom doors used to take 20 to 22 man hours,” commented Kevin Bittenbender, team leader of the woodworking shop. “Now a door can be completed in 12 hours, which not only gets the job done in about half the time, but frees up the team members to focus on more creative custom pieces and challenges which they all enjoy.” In building systems they reduced the batch size from an entire house of parts, to just enough parts to build a “bundle”, which can be moved out of the building with a forklift. “This simple change has cut our lead time by 66%, reduced production hours by 11%, and decreased the square footage that our process takes,” said Hans Porschitz, team leader of the building systems.

“The outcome we have experienced from the work we have done with the NH MEP has exceeded my expectations,” added Benson.

The NHMEP is an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP system 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.  
For more information, please visit [www.nhmep.org](http://www.nhmep.org), or phone 1-800-MEP-4MFG.

**-END-**