

ATN Success Story

Client:

Briggs & Stratton Corp.

State:

Alabama

Zip:

36830

NAICS Code:

33631

Client Size:

400

Project/Events:

Skills Upgrade Training

Success Story Title:

ATN Lean assistance helps Briggs & Stratton cut cost, improve efficiency, reduce inventory, expand capacity

Company Profile:

Briggs & Stratton Corporation, with headquarters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is the world's largest manufacturer of air-cooled gasoline engines. Briggs & Stratton designs, manufactures, markets, and services air cooled gasoline engines for outdoor power equipment worldwide. It operates through two main segments, Engines and Products.

The Engines segment offers engines primarily for various lawn and garden equipment applications, which include walk-behind lawn mowers, riding lawn mowers, garden tillers, and snow throwers; and industrial, construction, agricultural and other consumer applications that include generators, pumps, and pressure washers. It also manufactures replacement engines and service parts. This segment sells its products directly, as well as through sales and service distributors.

The Products segment offers portable and standby generators, pressure washers, snow throwers and lawn and garden powered equipment. It sells its products through various channels of retail distribution, including consumer home centers, warehouse clubs, mass merchants, and independent dealers under brands such as Briggs & Stratton, Brute, Craftsman, Ferris, John Deere, Murray, Simplicity, Snapper, Victa, and Troy-Bilt.

Situation:

Recent years have seen Briggs & Stratton battling both foreign and domestic competition. In recent months, the company has undergone many changes corporation wide, as a result. In 2012, the Auburn, Ala. plant cut jobs by about 10 percent. Some 250 workers were displaced as a result.

Solution:

Briggs & Stratton has used Lean Continuous Improvement for many years to standardize production lines and control inventory. During the company's current competition struggles, it has turned more heavily to the application of Lean CI as its first-line defense strategy. The company has enlisted ATN services corporation-wide to train and assist in the implementation of Lean CI. Most recently, it enrolled a team of its Lean CI personnel to participate in the Auburn University (Ala.) ATN centers new Lean Leadership Boot Camp. These company CI experts took the lessons learned and applied them at their respective locations.

Results:

Perhaps the most impressive result the team credits to ATN assistance is that it has now been able to bring back some 20 of those jobs recently lost. As part of Briggs & Stratton's competitive strategy, the company decided to no longer make horizontal shaft engines or lawn mower engines at its production facility Auburn. Instead, the plant is moving that line to Chongqing, China, where similar smaller engines have been produced since 2007. The company also is ceasing production of its portable generator line at the Auburn plant. In its place, it is bringing in its \$4 million, high-tech Vanguard V-Twin engine production line. The company is beginning hiring plans for higher-skilled technicians specifically for the Vanguard line.

Additional impacts credited to the broad ATN assistance and directly attributed to the training received in Lean CI include: a 25,000 square foot manufacturing space efficiency improvement corporation wide; an eight-day reduction in finished goods inventory; a \$.5 million investment in equipment upgrades; a \$30K investment in information technology; and the retention of more than 200 other jobs in the company due to increased efficiencies and cost savings.

Testimonial:

The ATN provides some of the most practical and applicable Lean CI training available, according to Jeff Gargus, the CI Manager at the Auburn plant.

"With 10 being the highest satisfaction rating on a ranking scale, ATN gets a 10," Gargus said. "We have our own internal Lean CI team of experts, but they benefit greatly from the training they receive through the ATN, and the benefits that result are tremendous."