

ATN Helps Door Frame Manufacturer Think More Innovatively

Company Name:

Dunbarton, Inc.

Company Profile:

Dunbarton, Inc., located in Dothan, Ala. is a manufacturer of prefinished steel door frames used primarily in hotels, commercial properties, dorms, and apartment buildings. It also assembles “manufactured housing” doors and fabricates other related door products. The company began its operations in Detroit, Michigan in moved to Alabama in 1972. Today the company has approximately 100 employees.

Situation:

During 2012, Dunbarton engaged the Alabama Technology Network to help improve its fabrication department efficiency through the facilitation of multiple Kaizen rapid improvement events. Later in the year, the company was made aware of an opportunity to participate in an Innovation Engineering Jumpstart session to assist in identifying growth opportunities and creative ways to approach some of its process improvement challenges. A diverse set of 10 employees were identified to participate in the session and were excited that the company’s management had decided to focus on these aspects of the business.

Assistance:

With support through a grant from Wallace Community College, ATN first conducted a “stimulus session” with the Dunbarton team to help them conduct needed process, competitor, technology, and customer research that would be used in the later Jumpstart session. ATN’s Eufaula office provided needed laptop computers on-site to help facilitate the collection of this information for some of its workers that didn’t have work computers.

Later in December, the Innovation Engineering session was conducted that helped “stretch the thinking” of the group regarding internal process innovation and new offering opportunities. The group identified over 40 ideas during the session that was interrupted by a tornado warning and narrowed the list to 2 concepts to initially focus on. At the conclusion of the Jumpstart session, several Dunbarton participants expressed thanks for session and stated that the Innovation Engineering approach was helpful and needed at the company.

In January 2013, ATN provided coaching to two Dunbarton project leaders selected for the “discover” portion of the project. It was quickly determined that one of the selected had “killer death threat” that could not be solved and helped the company fail fast, fail cheap and move on. The second concept selected involved a problem that hindered the accuracy and efficiency of providing quotes to customer prospects. Six weeks of coaching for this concept was provided and help the project leader and team better understand the Innovation Engineering methodology and to fine tune Dunbarton’s cost savings and customer promise message opportunity.

Results:

As a result of the Jumpstart session and coaching, the company has made several changes to address problems in this area using the concept defined. Customer service reps were provided additional training and several people have been moved to improve oversight and quality checks over the process.

Quote:

“We believe by making these personnel changes, and the concepts we have taken from the Innovation Engineering exercises, we will improve the flow of data greatly to the shop floor and decrease mistakes to a very small percentage. Thanks for all the help.”

Jason Woodham
Production Manager