



Device Technologies, Inc.: Small Company Achieves Large Gains

Through Grants from the MA Workforce Training Fund and the New England Business Association

A GBMP Client Case Study

Device Technologies, Inc. (DTi) in Southborough, Massachusetts, has been designing and manufacturing wire protection, cable management, enclosure seals, specialty fasteners and other solutions to protect critical equipment for nearly 35 years. Its roots go back even further to founder, Hector Petri, a multi-patented inventor, who started the enterprise in the basement of an old New England farmhouse. The business, still family-run, is now located in a climate-controlled Class A facility and serves the Aerospace, Computer, Defense, Food Processing, Information Technology, Medical Equipment, Power Systems, Renewable Energy, Telecommunications and Rail/Transportation industries.

In recent years, DTi has taken advantage of grants from the Massachusetts Workforce Training Fund (WTF), administered by the Commonwealth Corporation, and the Small Business Association of New England (SBANE), now known as the New England Business Association. These programs have helped the company to improve operations and increase sales and market share. DTi's President, Nick Petri, says that *"The value of these grant programs is that they challenge an organization to look within to improve systems and procedures, work together as a team and capitalize on each other's strengths. It brings people out of their shells and we gain as a result."*

Device Technologies' initial WTF grant in 2012, supported introductory courses in Lean and Continuous Improvement, provided by the Greater Boston Manufacturing Partnership (GBMP), at their facility. Lean process training can be applied to every aspect of a business. During one of the first classes at DTi, employees complained about DTi's sample process. When customers requested a sample of a certain product, it was difficult to locate and fulfilling the request often took days. By the end of the first training session a Kanban system for DTi's hundreds of

different samples had been set up and it would continue to be refined. GBMP's trainer, Continuous Improvement Manager, Ron Pujalte, said: *"Problems and processes that are not working for anyone are often the most fertile ground to apply Lean tools."* Other improvements included the installation of DTi's 'Lean, Mean & Green' board which keeps employee suggestions, and the resulting improvements, front and center at the entrance to the production facility. Petri added: *"If an employee has an idea, it's important for them to speak up and share it. Some ideas that may not seem significant at the time can turn out to be quite dynamic."*



A subsequent workforce training fund grant in 2016 helped bring DTi's new employees up to speed in Lean and the company as a whole continue its improvement journey. In one class, the efficacy of the sample area Kanban system was revisited, and employees discussed how it had been working. It turned out that there were further tweaks that could be made to improve the area's efficiency. Labels on sample boxes stored high up were hard to read and needed to be printed in larger fonts so they could be seen from below. A labeling/shipping station was added to the area, so the sample packages could be sent within minutes of a request rather than being routed through shipping. Other improvements included converting to paperless transactions, a more functionally organized production area and an increase in productivity from 40 ft. per minute to 50 on one of the grommet production lines, a 25% increase!



Nick Petri, commented: *"We've developed a lot of our own equipment, much of which has been customized. You start with one approach to get the process running but GBMP showed us how to optimize procedures and get things running a little faster and more efficiently. It's all about making incremental improvements, which, in the aggregate, are very worthwhile."*

As part of the grant, a Six Sigma Green Belt course was held in conjunction with another area company, Electronic Environments (EEC) of Marlborough that had also received a Workforce Training Fund grant. Participants from DTi and EEC took turns attending class at each other's facilities. Of the collaboration, Petri said: "There is an absolute value to benchmarking what you're doing against another company, even if that company is in a different kind of business. You learn from seeing how they interpret their data."

Not only have these improvements made life easier for employees, they've produced tremendous results for the business. DTi has had six years of sales growth since its first WTF grant and its average order has increased by 50 percent. A big part of the growth has been due to their Spring-Fast grommet series benefits proposition which outperforms the old nylon 21266 grommets while saving users 49% of total installed cost and increasing efficiency by 9.5 times!

Their roster has grown from fifteen to twenty-four full-time employees to accommodate the additional business. Petri added: *"With inflation being so low in the last few years, it is difficult to increase prices, but operating costs continue to grow, particularly with the addition of new employees. We need to find a way to keep costs stable for the end user."*

GBMP's Continuous Improvement Manager, Ron Pujalte summed it up: *"Device Technologies is a company that truly understands the benefits of ingrainin continuous improvement into their daily lives; it is refreshing to see new process improvements happening on a regular basis."*

Device Technologies also benefited from two matching grants from the Small Business Association of New England (SBANE), now known as the New England Business Association. The first, in 2016 provided assistance with exporting their products to Europe. The company is now exploring a European base of operations. A second grant in 2017, was marketing focused and allowed DTi to develop a stronger email marketing and media advertising campaign. As a result, the company added over 100 new customers in 2017!



For more information about Device Technologies please visit www.devicetech.com

For more information about GBMP please visit www.gbmp.org

For more information about the Massachusetts Workforce Training Fund Grant please visit workforcetrainingfund.org

For more information about the New England Business Association (SBANE) please visit www.NewEnglandBusiness.org



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About GBMP: The Greater Boston Manufacturing Partnership is a not for profit offering customized Lean and Six Sigma training with a mission to increase global competitiveness and employment opportunities in the United States. GBMP is a licensed affiliate of The Shingo Institute with 4 certified instructors on staff. GBMP also produces the annual Northeast L.E.A.N. Conference which attracts more than 600 manufacturing professionals from around the country each autumn in New England, now in its 12th year. GBMP provides a membership community for Lean practitioners from manufacturing, healthcare, insurance and other industries and produces an award-winning library of Lean training materials comprised of more than 30 DVDs (available streaming by subscription at www.leanflix.org), games, manuals and workbooks, including Toast Kaizen, the #1 selling Lean training video in the world.