



Newell Coach

Miami, OK Manufacturing Luxury

Oklahoma's Manufacturing Industry

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David Wheeler (left), a Manufacturing Extension Agent with the Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance, and Terry May, President of Tulsa's MESA Products.

For the past six years, Wheeler and the Alliance have helped MESA coordinate and implement its business-quality programs. The effort recently culminated when MESA earned the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. The company was one of three recipients from across the country. Mesa provides materials for cathodic protection systems that keep things like oil and gas pipelines from rusting. In addition to making the company's production more efficient through Lean Manufacturing, Wheeler helped MESA improve quality in areas including leadership, strategic planning and market focus.



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Happy Birthday, Oklahoma!

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OKLAHOMA KIDS MEAN BUSINESS

Junior Achievement's Innovative Exchange City Program is now available to students in Oklahoma City. Exchange City is a nationally recognized, innovative learning program that provides elementary students with an understanding of basic economic concepts and personal financial literacy while developing and reinforcing math, language arts and citizenship skills. Students learn first-hand what it takes to create a business, produce a newspaper, supervise employees, hold an elected office, and personally earn and manage money. During their day at Exchange City, students become citizens of a city that consists of 14 businesses including City Hall. Each student has been hired for a specific job that is crucial to the overall success of the city.

Since 1967, Junior Achievement of Greater Oklahoma City has educated Oklahoma's youth about business, economics and free enterprise to improve the quality of their lives. Through a dedicated volunteer network, Junior Achievement provides in-school and after-school programs for students in grades K-12. Junior Achievement offers educational programs that focus on seven key content areas: business, citizenship, economics, entrepreneurship, ethics/character, financial literacy and career development.

Exchange City was specifically designed to develop the skills of 4th, 5th and 6th grade students. The Exchange City opportunity is provided by Junior Achievement of Greater Oklahoma City – serving students in Central and Western Oklahoma. The Oklahoma City Location is the 2nd floor of the Omniplex, 2100 NE 52nd Street.

By participating in this unique, experiential learning program, where students learn by doing, students experience first-hand responsibility, leadership, decision-making and

team-building. The classroom curriculum aligns with the Oklahoma PASS objectives and reinforces math, technology, citizenship and language arts skills learned in the classroom.

- Provides students with a memorable learning experience that reinforces skills taught within the classroom and a real opportunity for career exploration.
- Curriculum and program materials for each student.
- Training workshops and materials for both teachers and volunteers.
- A state of the art learning facility

designed to maximize student skill development.

- Follow-up curriculum and evaluation tools.

To get your school involved, please contact April Bortmess, Exchange City Director, Greater Oklahoma City, 405-235-3399 ext.104 or abortmess@jaokc.org

There is a \$30 per student fee. Junior Achievement works in partnership with foundations, corporations, businesses and individuals to provide financial assistance to schools in need. ♦



SWEET HOME OKLAHOMA



The name is foreign, the flavors exotic, but the products are purely homemade right here in Oklahoma.

Bedrè, Norwegian for “better”, is truly among the highest quality chocolates in the world, and is

made accordingly. The company, an economic enterprise of the Chickasaw Nation, utilizes custom-made equipment from a variety of European manufacturers to effectively and efficiently produce chocolate that literally melts in your mouth.

And as Oklahoma’s largest

chocolate factory, Bedrè does it all from its sparkling clean and delicious smelling candy plant in Pauls Valley.

Bedrè Chocolates, featured nationwide in upscale shops and neighborhood creameries, transcends all socioeconomic distinctions for a very simple reason – it tastes great.

"We make our chocolates with a higher cocoa butter content, and without paraffin," says Bedrè Manager, Nic Carlsson. "That means the chocolate actually melts at body temperature, or whenever it hits your tongue."

The precise mixing of ingredients from secret recipes is done in large tanks which hold hundreds of gallons of liquid chocolate. Chocolate in the tanks is heated to precise temperatures at exacting rates to provide perfectly "tempered" chocolate.

Water-jacketed pipes deliver the chocolate to enrobers at the precise temperature providing the perfect consistency to coat chips, nuts, cookies and various other coated centers.

The precisely heated chocolate is also delivered to molds which form everything from chocolate coins to bite-sized filled pieces to candy bars.

Along with chocolate, other tanks contain peanut butter, caramel and other ingredients to form centers for candy bars and filled pieces. From there conveyers transport the confections through cooling tunnels with strictly controlled temperature, air flow and humidity. Candy emerging from the tunnels is dry and ready for packaging.

All chocolate products are packaged on site through either automated or manual means, and sport various brands or private labels depending on retail destinations.

Since Bedrè opened its 17,800 square-foot facility in 2003, the company's annual sales have more than tripled. In 2005, the move was made to a more automated system which impacted the quality of the products in a positive way.

"Now that the ingredient mix is precisely controlled, it provides a superior, more consistent product," said Carlsson.

The increased production capacity and room for future growth has expanded marketing efforts as well. Not only have sales to established clients like Neiman-Marcus increased, but retailers like Braum's and Love's Country Stores will now be covered with chocolates made at the Bedrè factory.

And it's not just the gourmet chocolate line that is evolving. Bedrè is enriching and expanding its sugar-free line of chocolates to an ever-growing market. The company also has an established fundraising line and is going international with chocolates in Canada, the U.K. and Singapore to date.

Although the chocolate factory is cranking out scrumptious candy on a daily basis, the four busiest times of the year for Bedrè are: Christmas, Mother's Day, Easter, and Valentine's Day - weeks when the chocolate flows 24/7.

Bedrè is one of the many diverse businesses of the Chickasaw Nation, who has owned and operated the chocolate company since 2000. Bedrè is the only Native American owned chocolate company in the United States.

The Bedrè chocolate factory also features a retail store and viewing gallery where daily tours explain and show people how the chocolate is made, complete with free samples.

For more information on tours, call 405-207-9320. ♦



LAFARGE TULSA CEM



A world-class operation dedicated to serving its customers, communities and employees, the Lafarge Tulsa Cement Plant continues a tradition of excellence that began nearly a half century ago. The plant's success was built on a consistent commitment to excellence, a safe working environment, and an active, positive relationship in and around the community. Since Lafarge's acquisition of the facility in 2001, these same principles of operating remain a priority.

The Tulsa Cement Plant, situated on 1,235 acres and set atop a limestone formation with more than forty years of remaining reserves, has been producing materials for the construction industry since 1961. It was the dream child of brothers Frank and Herbert Tyler, who founded the Dewey Portland Cement Company in Dewey, Oklahoma in 1907. The Tulsa

site served as an ideal source for high quality raw materials. Its proximity to major markets, water transportation, and two turnpikes also ensured that 2609 North 145th East Avenue was the perfect site. It's no wonder Dewey's Tulsa Cement plant opened to much fanfare in 1961.

Forty years later Lafarge acquired the Tulsa Plant from U.K.-based Blue Circle Industries. Dewey had become a division of industrial products giant American-Marietta Company when its Tulsa plant opened in 1960. Blue Circle Industries, formerly known as Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers Ltd., began developing interests across the United States, in places such as the Tulsa plant, throughout the 1980s and 1990s and had become the sixth largest cement producer in the world. With its acquisition by Lafarge Corporation in July 2001, the Tulsa plant became part of the world's leading producer of

cement and building materials. In its first full year of operation by Lafarge, production capability topped 235,000 tons of cement – with only one kiln, one raw mill and one finish mill. Since that time, another kiln, raw mill, and two more finish mills have increased production capability to an astounding 750,000 tons per year. Customer pick-ups and deliveries occur at the plant, as well as at terminals located in Oklahoma City and Springfield, Missouri.

Creating the finest cement is an amazing process that begins in the quarry. Here, Lafarge employees extract limestone, which is crushed and transported by conveyor system to mix silos. The raw materials, shale, sand, iron ore, and limestone, are then mixed together and heated to over 2600 degrees Fahrenheit in the kiln, becoming "clinker." When the clinker emerges from the kiln, it is cooled, mixed with gypsum and ground into

MENT PLANT

a fine powder known as Portland Cement. This cement is then pumped into large storage silos for shipping and distribution. The bulk cement is then loaded onto trucks and railcars and shipped throughout the region or bagged for distribution.

This is a mammoth process that keeps kilns operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 722,000 tons of product were produced in 2006 within a total grind capacity of 811,000 tons. Lafarge holds a cement leadership position not only in the greater Tulsa metropolitan area, but also across the state of Oklahoma.

High quality cements from the Tulsa Plant are used for a broad range of projects that include the I-40 emergency bridge replacement, Tulsa's Creek and Cherokee Turnpikes, new additions to both St. Francis and St. John's medical complexes in Tulsa, Oklahoma State University's Boone Pickens Stadium, Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport, Bud Walton Arena and the Razorback stadium addition in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Backed by the strong partnerships Lafarge builds with its communities, Tulsa employees hail from all across Green Country, including Nowata, Sand Springs, Tulsa, Broken Arrow, Beggs, Wagoner and Skiatook. Characterized by their dedication and professionalism, Lafarge employees proudly participate in many company sponsored programs. They provide time, money and in-kind resources to agencies such as the public school systems in Collinsville and Catoosa, Junior Achievement, Up with Trees, Habitat for Humanity, the Ozone Alert Program, the Laura Dester Shelter for Children in Tulsa and various local charities and sports teams. The Portland Cement Association recognized the Lafarge Tulsa for its community efforts by awarding

the facility with the PCA 2004 Community Outreach Award.

Lafarge's environmental leadership is legendary. By practicing a consistent commitment to preserving and protecting the environment, the company has made steady advances in environmental preservation and developed and successfully implemented numerous strategies and programs across North America. The Tulsa plant has invested millions of dollars in environmental controls and continuous improvement. It is committed to working with wildlife experts toward sustainable development in the area and serves as an active, positive force in the community, working toward cleaner and greener operations. The Tulsa plant has established nature habitats on a portion of its rehabilitated

acreage, and these areas have been certified by the Wildlife Habitat Council. Lafarge also supports the Nature Conservancy, the World Wildlife Fund and Habitat for Humanity International.

For more company and product information visit the Lafarge North America web site at www.lafargenorthamerica.com or call (918) 437-3902.

Lafarge North America is the U.S. and Canada's largest diversified supplier of construction materials such as cement and cement-related products, ready-mixed concrete, gypsum wallboard, aggregates, asphalt and concrete products. The company's materials are used in residential, commercial, institutional and public works construction across the U.S. and Canada. ♦



THE OKLAHOMA MANUFACTU



Through innovation and diligence, Oklahoma manufacturers are learning to succeed in a 21st Century economy. The Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance plays a key role in helping the state's industry grow and prosper. Now more than ever, manufacturing is about competitiveness, continuous learning and constant change.

"The Manufacturing Alliance is committed to improving our state's economy by leading the movement toward modernization," said President Roy Peters. "One of the most important components of Oklahoma's economy is manufacturing. It generates nearly 16 percent of the Gross State Product—the largest of any economic sector. The gateway Oklahoma must travel through to catch up with the rest of the nation, in terms of per capita personal income and economic growth, is unlocked through manufacturing."

The Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance is a not-for-profit organization providing a variety of support to Oklahoma industry. Through a network of manufacturing

extension agents and applications engineers, the Manufacturing Alliance provides hands-on resources for improving productivity, increasing sales, and reducing costs. In partnership with an array of organizations, it connects small and medium-sized manufacturers to local expertise and state, regional, and national resources. "We make a positive difference for the state's manufacturers and Oklahoma's economy," Peters says. "Often working behind the scenes, our organization builds beneficial, lasting relationships that lead to beneficial, lasting results."

In the past five years alone, the Manufacturing Alliance assisted more than 2,000 individual companies. "We continue to help manufacturers create wealth and bring prosperity to the workforce by providing the leadership and assistance they need to become more successful," Peters says. "Our strengths, built over more than a dozen years of service, have established us as a trusted and valued organization."

Oklahoma's 4,000 manufacturers employ about 240,000 and pay a livable wage. It is vital to rural Oklahoma where the loss of one company can devastate a community. One of manufacturing's great strengths is its ability to innovate and apply innovation to increase the state's overall productivity. This leads to a high "multiplier" for increasing demand for intermediate goods and services in other sectors. The manufacturing multiplier, according to the Commerce Department, is 2.43 in intermediate and final output. This compares to multipliers of only 1.5 for financial and business services and 1.7 for health and education services. Rising manufacturing output, then, provides a bigger boost to overall economic growth than that of other sectors. On average, for

every \$1 million in manufacturing sales there are eight manufacturing jobs plus six service sector jobs. For every 150 manufacturing jobs there is a \$30 million economic impact. "Simply put, the health of Oklahoma manufacturing affects all Oklahomans," Peters said. "When I visit manufacturers around the state, one fact that is increasingly apparent is employment growth in manufacturing is embedded in high-wage jobs. High-wage jobs are being created, and wages for existing jobs are climbing."

The Manufacturing Alliance receives funding through the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology and through the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. On the federal level, the Alliance is part of a national Manufacturing Extension Partnership, which supports similar agencies in each state. A variety of private and local community supporters also makes the organization's mission possible. More than 40 local sponsors—CareerTech centers, higher education institutions, and economic development organizations—contribute office space, clerical support and pay part of the salary of the manufacturing extension agents. The agents live in their communities and work with manufacturers in their area. "The model is based on the agricultural extension system," Peters said. "But instead of suggesting ways of improving crop production, our goal is to help manufacturers increase sales and reduce costs. They look at industry needs from the manufacturer's viewpoint."

The agents provide a variety of services such as developing marketing plans, helping introduce new technology and suggesting new training. They also provide training on Lean Manufacturing, which involves

URING ALLIANCE

analyzing how information and materials flow in the manufacturing environment, then continuously improving processes to increase profitability.

“The assistance provided by the Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence is helping us stay competitive,” said Bill Ridenour, president of UPCO in Claremore. Extension agents helped UPCO align its management group so they could function as a team instead of focusing on individual processes. After intense planning the Manufacturing Alliance helped UPCO implement a new manufacturing system. In the old system, a customer would place an order for a large amount of product. The customer would receive the materials in bulk, regardless if they needed that much product immediately or not. The new system allows UPCO to release mixed bundles here and there, meaning the company can quickly turn around orders for small batches or fill larger orders in a manner more timely than ever imagined. To get where UPCO really wanted to be, the team tackled product flow throughout the plant. The factory was laid out like a series of small cities before the process. Key equipment, such as lathe and grinders, were located at opposite ends of the plant. Product movement was identified as a key area for improvement. Before, extraneous lift trucks moved the product from a machine to a holding area before being transported to another holding area for the next machine. To improve flow, UPCO reduced distance between many of its machines and installed a conveyor system to automatically transfer from one process to the next. The Manufacturing Alliance also is helping the company implement

automated data capture with bar code scanning and RFID communication. That will save the employees from having to manually enter information into the company's system and save an extra two or three hours of planning time.

Ridenour says the biggest surprise he witnessed was the increased capacity once changes were made in the plant. The first year into Lean, UPCO's sales jumped 35 percent, while inventory declined nearly 30 percent.

At the end of every project carried out by the Manufacturing Alliance, the extension agents sit down with the firms' CEOs to determine an estimate on the dollars saved and retained.

...the health of Oklahoma manufacturing affects all Oklahomans...

Also in its tool belt is a partnership between the Manufacturing Alliance and the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. Through a formal agreement, the Alliance serves as ODOC's field agent to make sure companies are taking advantage of state incentives. Kay Watson, a manufacturing extension agent serving the Ardmore area, recently worked with IMTEC on its application for the Oklahoma's Quality Jobs Program.

“Quality Jobs is probably one of

the best tax incentives Oklahoma has,” Watson said. “The program provides cash rebates to firms that create new jobs. For companies that meet certain requirements, the program provides cash payments of up to 5 percent of the newly-created payroll. “This is cash back for creating new jobs,” Watson said. “It's a wonderful deal if you meet the criteria and the Manufacturing Alliance is there to make sure the application and paperwork are submitted correctly.”

At the leadership core of the Manufacturing Alliance is a diverse group of directors that reflects the varied nature of Oklahoma itself.

“The diversity of our board of directors is essential for credibility with small manufacturers,” said Cheryl Hill, board chair and president of Hill Manufacturing in Broken Arrow. “If the board was comprised of bureaucrats and officers of large corporations, I think most small manufacturers would lose interest.”

The board is drawn from four groups: small- and medium-sized manufacturers, larger corporations, public institutions, and companies serving manufacturers.

“The Alliance board is designed to take a broad view of Oklahoma's manufacturing industry,” said Peters. “That starts, of course, with leaders representing the manufacturers themselves—both small and large. But it also includes government and public agencies that work with those manufacturers; and companies that play a supporting role to the industry.”

For more information or to locate your local extension agent, phone the Manufacturing Alliance at (918) 592-0722 or visit the website at www.okalliance.com. ♦

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT OK

What is unique about Oklahoma?

Is it the multitude of redbud trees that bloom every spring? How about the gusty, knock-you-over “wind sweeping down the plain?” Where else is garden soil comprised of red clay? One thing you may not have considered is how unique some of Oklahoma’s employment laws are as they impact unsuspecting Oklahoma businesses. Consider the following:

Workers’ Compensation System.

The most recent statistics show that in 2005, 144,700 persons were employed in the manufacturing industry in Oklahoma. Filings by employees injured on the job in manufacturing have actually declined since 2001, from 2,747 in 2001 to 1,887 in 2005. That is good news for manufacturers.

But even though the numbers have declined, the issues involving workers hurt on the job have not. One of the most common legal issues facing Oklahoma employers is how and when and whether they can terminate an employee after the employee files a workers’ compensation claim. Oklahoma, like many states, provides that it is against the law to terminate an employee for simply exercising their rights under the Workers’ Compensation Act. Yet, some circumstances arise where terminating an employee sometime subsequent to the filing of a comp claim may be appropriate and necessary. When can you do it?

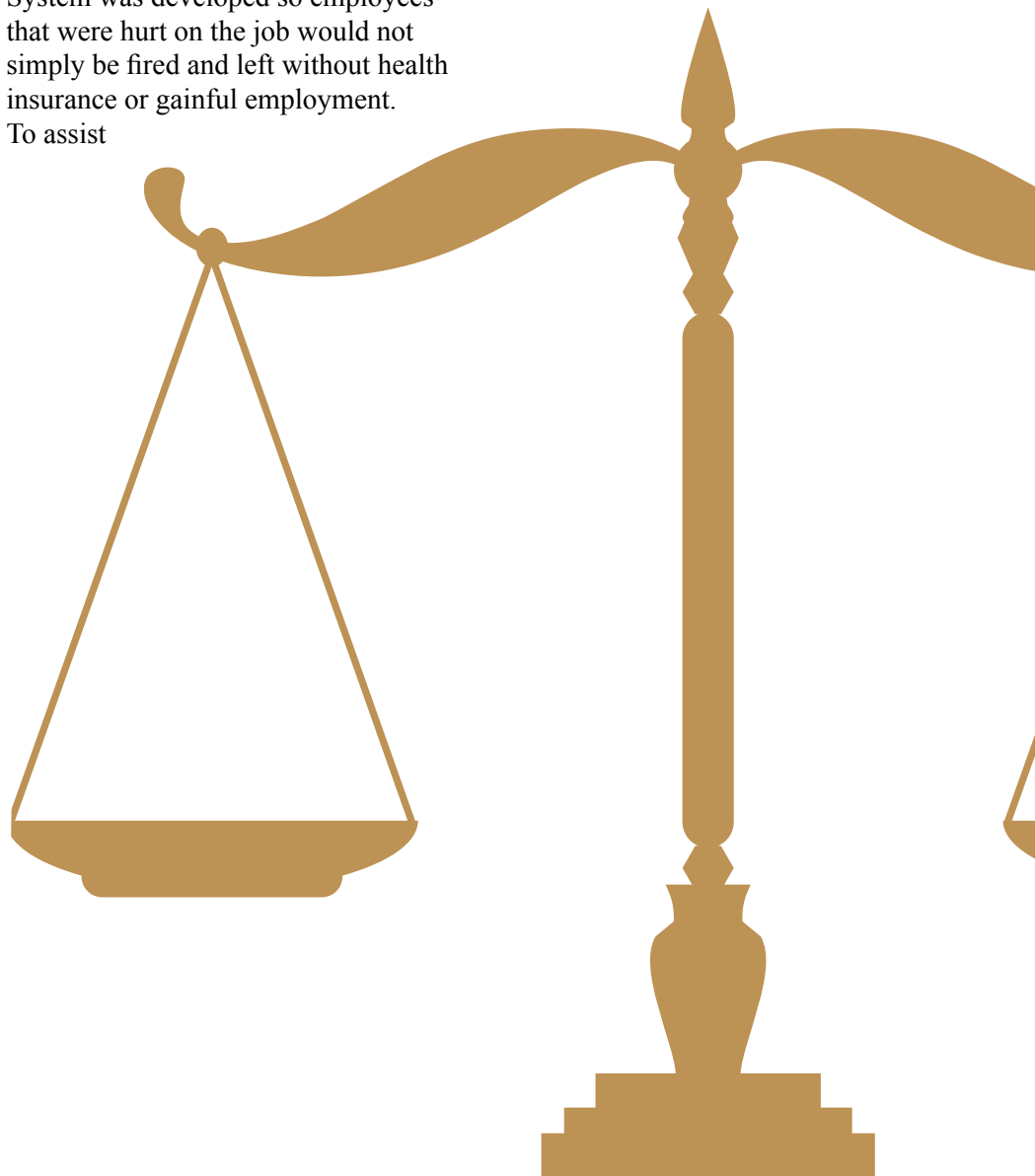
Oklahoma law says: “After an employee’s period of temporary total disability (TTD) has ended, no person, firm, partnership, corporation, or other entity shall be required to rehire or retain any employee who is determined to be physically unable to perform assigned duties. The failure of an employer to rehire or retain any such employee shall in no manner be deemed a violation of this

section.” This has led the Oklahoma Supreme Court to rule that employers cannot terminate an employee for absence-related reasons while s/he is on TTD. Can you terminate a TTD employee for some other reason—say, for example, embezzlement that you discover while the employee is off on comp? Absolutely. But the timing of the termination and the investigation leading up to it must be done thoughtfully and carefully. It is always wise to consult your trusted Human Resource expert and/or an employment attorney when considering terminating an employee who has filed a comp claim.

Occupational Safety.

The Workers’ Compensation System was developed so employees that were hurt on the job would not simply be fired and left without health insurance or gainful employment. To assist

with preventing the injuries from ever arising, Oklahoma has strict safety laws that apply to all industries, including manufacturing. Oklahoma law says: “Each employer shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees, commensurate with the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970.” Equally important is the requirement that: “No person shall discharge, discriminate or take adverse personnel action against any employee because such employee has filed any complaint, or instituted or caused to

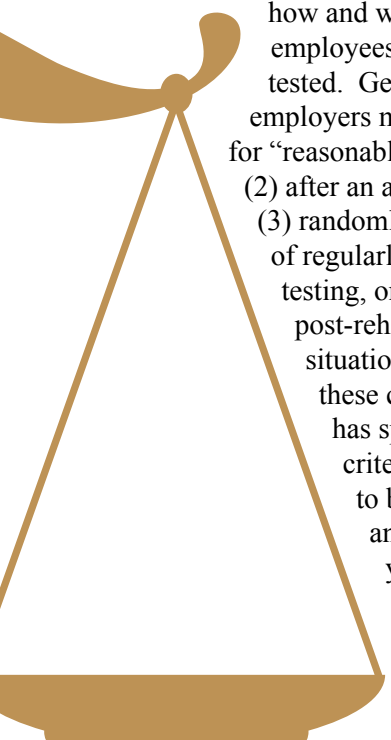


OKLAHOMA EMPLOYMENT LAWS?

be instituted any proceeding under or related to this act . . .” This provision protects employees who are trying to protect both themselves and their co-workers from harm. This does not necessarily mean that employees have free reign to knowingly file false complaints to try and disrupt a business. But it does mean you would be foolish (and legally liable) if you terminate an employee for complaining about unsafe work conditions.

Drug & Alcohol Testing.

Oklahoma has adopted one of the most far reaching and toughest drug and alcohol testing laws in the nation and employers must be absolutely sure they are in compliance with the statute before drug testing employees. Oklahoma laws allow for both the testing of applicants (after conditional offers of employment) and of current employees and specifies



how and when current employees may be tested. Generally, employers may test (1) for “reasonable suspicion”, (2) after an accident, (3) randomly, (4) as part of regularly scheduled testing, or (5) in a post-rehabilitative situation. Each of these categories has specific criteria that need to be followed and included in your written policy.

An effective drug testing policy can yield

very positive results. For instance, employers are not required to retain employees using illegal substances.

Furthermore, if an employee is discharged as a result of failing a drug test, he/she is disqualified from receiving unemployment benefits. Finally, refusing a lawful drug test is grounds for termination and will disqualify a person from receiving unemployment benefits. But it is imperative that employers know and comply with the state’s drug testing laws. They are unique and a trap for the unwary!

Workplace smoking of tobacco.

For some employers smoking in the workplace is an issue. Oklahoma is one of 31 states that now restricts smoking in “indoor workplaces.” Oklahoma’s law restricts the “possession of lighted tobacco in any form” in work areas, employee lounges, restrooms, conference rooms, classrooms, employee cafeterias, hallways, and any other spaces used or visited by employees. Some states, like New York, impose a complete, no-exceptions workplace smoking ban (“Smoking is prohibited in all places of employment.”). Oklahoma’s law is not considered to be one of a complete ban, because part of the statute allows employers to provide “smoking rooms.” Oklahoma employers may set up the smoking rooms that allow employees to smoke where no work is performed, provided the room is fully enclosed, exhausted directly to the outside, and is away from entrances. The statute specifically allows employers to choose a more restrictive policy, including being totally smoke-free.

Ironically, Oklahoma also has a “smoker protection” law, which makes it unlawful for an employer to:

1. Discharge any individual, or otherwise disadvantage any individual, with respect to compensation, terms, conditions or privileges of employment because the

individual is a nonsmoker or smokes or uses tobacco products during nonworking hours; or

2. Require as a condition of employment that any employee or applicant for employment abstain from smoking or using tobacco products during nonworking hours.

This means that although employers can eliminate smoking on the employer’s premises, it cannot restrict employees from smoking during time away from work.

Interestingly, the Oklahoma smoker protection law does permit a non-smoking requirement as a part of a collective bargaining agreement.

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A few unique laws worth repealing.

Oklahoma also has a few unique laws worth repealing:

- In Tulsa, Oklahoma, it is against the law to open a soda bottle without the supervision of a licensed engineer.
- In Norman, it’s against the law to make ugly faces at a dog.
- In Shawnee, three or more dogs may not meet on private property without the consent of the landowner.
- In Hartshorne, be sure not to put a hypnotized person in a display window, as it is against a City Ordinance.
- So be careful with your pop bottles, dogs and hypnotized employees.

MUNCIE POWER PRODUCTS



In early 2004, Ray Chambers was presented with an interesting yet common charge in today's manufacturing segment – grow the company by increasing output in your existing facility.

Muncie Power Products, which has been around for 70 years, has set its sites on becoming the No. 1 global provider of innovative system solutions for PTOs and fluid power products to the truck and selected mobile equipment markets. To achieve this, company leaders knew changes had to be made in most of its eight facilities scattered across the nation, particularly at the PTO manufacturing and distribution center in Tulsa.

“We were encouraged to dust off our old expansion plans to

accomplish our growth goals, but we knew there was a better way,” says Chambers, who was familiar with the Lean Enterprise concept and certain if implemented properly would get the company where it needed to be.

Lean Enterprise helps companies produce more with existing resources by eliminating non-value added activities. It establishes a systematic approach to reducing waste and creating flow throughout an entire company.

One of the first steps was to develop a Lean strategy team, consisting of Doug Sullivent, manufacturing manager and Lean leader, Maurice Coletti, production control manager, John Robertson, distribution manager, and Mark Todd, engineering manager.

Chambers also solicited the help

of Curtis Evans, a manufacturing extension agent with the Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance. Evans is sponsored by Northeastern State University-Broken Arrow, one of 20 agents across the state that help manufacturers maximize efficiencies.

“Ray Chambers had the vision, and they jumped in with both



feet,” says Evans. “Muncie was very focused on what needed to be accomplished and aggressive about going after it. They did the most planning of any company I had seen. Ray had it planned, but he stepped back and let the employees handle the implementation.”

Chambers says one of the key ingredients in the company’s success model has been an extremely dedicated and talented workforce committed to getting customers the products they want, when they need them.

“We get all of the employees together every four to six weeks and feed them lunch just to show them how much we appreciate them,” Sullivent said. “It really is difficult to describe how talented these people are and how the management team feels about each of them. We believe these functions would pay for themselves even if things weren’t going great right now. Our turnover rate is well below the national, state and industry average and it is a direct reflection on the way we treat our employees. We see this as a key to retaining our most valuable asset, our employees

With such a vision on customer satisfaction, employees didn’t question the Lean concept, rather immediately embraced it.

“I am convinced that we have the best workforce in the industry,” Chambers added. “Sometimes I feel fortunate just to be able to work with them.”

The Muncie factory in Tulsa has a storied history. Fred Lamar, global purchasing manager, has been at the location for nearly 40 years.

“The Muncie Power Products building was first purchased from Hale-Hasell in November 1968 by Sperry-Vickers. Sperry Vickers manufactured PTO’s, winches and planetary drives at this same location

until 1986 when Muncie Power Products purchased the building and the PTO product line,” Lamar said. “I have literally grown up in this building. I was one of the original employees to move in with Sperry-Vickers in 1968 and it has been a real evolution. The recent Lean initiatives have changed the way we look at ourselves and the world today. I truly look forward to what is next in store for us.”

By implementing Lean principles, Muncie not only avoided the high cost of building expansions by freeing up more than 15,000 square feet of space, but sees the potential to free up an additional 15,000 square feet to satisfy future growth. The Lean team meets weekly to discuss upcoming events and establish priorities and actions necessary to accomplish initiatives in Lean events.

Muncie’s Tulsa location has been able to exponentially grow its business without losing any of its 120 employees. In fact, the company

has hired a few new employees but more than doubled its production.

While it’s the human element that makes it possible, robotic machines and automation play an important role in Muncie’s output level. “Our shaft and gear cells have three robots that deliver product from machine to machine—from raw material to a finished part,” Coletti said. “This technology is not new and I am not sure that we even knew the entire benefits of this concept in 1982 when we first installed the robotic cells. I am pretty certain that the justification was based on a piece-cost reduction only. Even so, these cells manufacture product in a one piece flow, eliminating the batch process and inefficiencies that can be generated in a value stream from excess inventories. This philosophy of manufacturing has made it easy to convert our production planning process from MRP to Kanban-driven for the products they produce.”

Chambers says an important



enabler for implementing Lean has been the unique partnership of services and support the company has received from the The Alliance, Tulsa Technology Center and Industrial Solutions, a private consulting firm based in Tulsa.

“Between the monetary funding, facilities, curriculum and expertise in Lean consulting, we feel we have really reaped benefits that others in competing states might not have available to them,” he says. “The effort to put together a comprehensive training and implementation model was very simple and easy to execute.”

The process has gone so smoothly and the results have been so impressive that the company’s corporate headquarters has grasped the concept. Although many of Muncie’s corporate executives had never been exposed to Lean, they were in tune with the notion of improving services to customers and have been passionate supporters, Chambers says.

The Lean process has now taken hold in Muncie, Ind., and making tremendous strides with the appointing of two Lean champions,

Gordon McIlwain and Jon Miller. The company recently linked changes in Tulsa and Muncie to create a seamless flow of information and services to its internal and external customers.

“Even in the midst of rapid growth, when everyone feels stretched to the limits, implementing Lean is a great thing and can still result in real gains,” says Gerry Raubach, Industrial Solutions president. “In Muncie’s case, it demonstrated the need for management to be persistent in pursuing the path and not giving in to the urgency of the moment.”

After one year of coaching and training, Muncie now has five certified Lean leaders in Tulsa that effectively manage Kaizen events on a regular, regimented schedule. Chambers says that after 18 months of living the Lean culture, Muncie employees wouldn’t go back to business as usual.

“When people are given the opportunity to design their own work area and improve the efficiency and safety of their working conditions, it creates an atmosphere of cooperation and understanding at all levels of the

organization,” says Chambers. “As more and more people are affected by the Lean process, we are receiving an ever increasing amount of input from our company employees on how to improve our service to our customers and our work environment.”

While it might be difficult to estimate the total impact the Lean process will have on Muncie’s ability to serve its customers, Chambers and the Tulsa employees are excited about the possibilities the changes have and continue to present.

From an implementation standpoint, Evans says it presents a textbook example that other companies would be wise to follow.

“This was the perfect example of how Lean should – and can – work,” says Evans. “Almost any company, I don’t care what they are manufacturing, can use Lean. True, they are all unique in the products they produce, but processes are processes, and all have waste. The idea is to eliminate the waste and become more efficient. The Muncie implementation is an outstanding example of what can be accomplished if you understand the goal.” ♦



A WINNING TEAM WITH LOCAL DRIVE

Norman's Business Services Team is a fundamental effort in Economic Development. Executive Director of Norman Economic Development Coalition, Don Wood, assembled his team members about ten years ago. These members, consisting of representatives from the Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing, the Norman Chamber, the City of Norman, Moore Norman Technology Center and the local Workforce One-Stop Center, have provided their services as local supporters to many Norman businesses. "We work as a support system to local businesses," said Wood. "We've taken the resources and the contacts to them so that they may receive year-round help." With meetings scheduled twice a month, depending on the needs of local businesses, the Norman Business Services Team has developed close and lasting relationships with community companies.

The team has been especially resourceful in assisting businesses with expansion needs. They were able to help C&C Trailers, a company that manufactures custom aluminum horse, stock and cargo trailers, move to a larger facility enabling them to increase their employee base to 100 plus employees.

This dynamic team also helped Immuno-Mycologies (Immy), a Norman business that produces fungal diagnostic products, move to a larger facility in early 2006. Their state-of-the-art facility is located in The Norman Business Park about four miles east of Interstate 35 and two miles east of the University of Oklahoma Research Campus. Neighboring businesses in the park are Office Max, Albon Engineering and ClientLogic. This new facility has been instrumental in Immy's expansion and product development capabilities.

The Norman Business Services Team maintains its relationships through personal interaction. Their

purpose is to provide whatever support local employers might need to develop their businesses, and with so many accomplishments in economic development, hats off is given to Mr. Wood and his dedicated team of



community leaders.

For more information contact Don Wood, Executive Director of Norman Economic Development Coalition at (405) 573-1900 or Deidre Ebrey, Director of Economic Development for the City of Moore at (405) 793.5224. ❖

Don Wood, CEcD

Executive Director

Norman Economic Development Coalition

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MOORE'S BUSINESS SERVICES TEAM

Moore's Business Services Team has made plans for "check-in" visits to their targeted seven businesses this year. Their relationship with these businesses has been continued due to the team's efficient site-visiting tactics. These vital businesses employ about 700 members of the Moore community. "It has been a year since we visited with them, so we are going back this year to see if they are undergoing stress or need any assistance," said Todd Jenson, Economic Development Specialist for the City of Moore.

The Moore Business Services Team has recently incorporated a retention and expansion program called Synchronist Business Information System, which city staff may use to target existing businesses to discuss concerns, issues, and opportunities affecting their business. The Synchronist System is a software tool to organize, analyze and report company information, giving community leaders insight into the dynamics of the local economy. "The program is an outreach initiative designed to retain industry and jobs while fostering expansion, growth, and development," said Jenson.

The Synchronist interview proved to be a very successful tool in identifying a need of a local business in safety and health planning. The team connected this business with Moore Norman Technology Center, which offered the local company 40 hours of safety and health plan training and created a Loss Control Prevention Manual for them. "This training was a huge success," said Jenson. "This is one of the seven companies we will do a follow up interview with this year."

Moore's Business Services Team is a key group in Moore's economic development. The City of Moore has visited 33 businesses since the inception of the Synchronist Businesses Information System. Armed with this new system, Moore's distinguished team is looking toward the future, specifically through using a retail module of the Synchronist System. "Retail is obviously a key driver in Moore's economy so we are excited about the addition of a retail component to the e-synchronist tool," said Deidre Ebrey, Economic Development Director for the City of Moore. ❖



Newwe Coach

h

High-End Luxury and High-End Style!

Today in NE Oklahoma, rural small town business no longer has the same connotation it once did. Instead, it is synonymous with high-end luxury and high style. Case in point, Newell Coach in Miami, Oklahoma.

This year, Newell Coach is celebrating their 40 year anniversary in the motorhome industry and they owe their longevity to the fact that they have been the most forward thinking coach manufacturer in the industry since their inception in 1967. "Our founder, L.K. Newell, was not happy to stick with the early industry design ideas" says Scott Lawson, Vice President/Manufacturing. "He preferred to think ahead, be innovative, and try new ideas".

An example of this innovative attitude is that two of the most popular trends in the motorhome industry, the rear engine motorhome and diesel power for motorhomes, were both introduced by the late L.K. Newell in the early 1970's; a full decade before gaining common acceptance for luxury motor coaches.

This "thinking outside the box" spirit is demonstrated aptly by how Mr. Newell got into the motorhome business in the first place. In 1967, Mr. Newell traveled from his Oklahoma home to El Monte, California, to take delivery of a new Streamline motorhome. Manufactured by a division of the Streamline Trailer Company, the then top-of-the-line Streamline luxury motorhome featured an aluminum body similar to the firm's trailers, and was mounted on a very conventional one-ton Ford gas powered chassis. Within two weeks of taking possession of his new Streamline however, Mr. Newell returned to the factory to have a few "corrections" performed. Always the outspoken person, Newell shared some of his suggestions for product improvements with the owner of Streamline. He was met with a challenge that has now become a company legend: "If you're so damned smart, why don't you just buy the motorhome operation from me?" Within hours, a deal was struck, and L.K. Newell was in the motor coach manufacturing business. Ironically, while the remaining portions of Streamline did not survive the turbulent RV market of the 1970's, the motorhome division that Streamline sold to L.K. Newell in 1967 has been in continuous and successful operation ever since as Newell Coach Corporation.

No doubt Mr. Newell would be proud that his company has continued his forward thinking philosophy. You only need to look at one of the newest





innovations; the home theater room. The new bedrooms can now be equipped with a Murphy style bed that folds flat to the wall, allowing a 78 inch screen to drop down from the ceiling at the touch of a button. Add to that a slide out on the opposite wall that contains a row of theater-style seating, and you have a screening room to rival any in a conventional home.

According to Lawson, "Three things make us truly unique in the industry. 1) We build our coaches from the ground up; we do not use a pre-made chassis. 2) Each coach is custom built. Since 1967, we have built 1229 coaches, and no two have been the same. 3) We offer factory direct sales. You can't purchase our coaches, new, from anyone but us".

Mr. Newell built the first rear

engine version of the Newell coach in 1969. However, he was not satisfied with the compromises required by using a purchased chassis, so in 1970 he designed and built his own built-from-scratch pusher motorhome chassis. This innovative chassis design included a unique bridge construction technique that eliminated the industry standard frame rails between the front and rear axles, maximizing under floor storage space-the first basement motorhome!

Newell was also offering his first diesel powered motorhomes in 1972, far ahead of the rest of the industry. While pusher engines, diesel power and basement storage are taken for granted in today's motorhome world, such was not the case over two decades ago when Newell

was running his coach company. Newell believed he could include the desirable features of a bus, such as the rear diesel engine, under floor storage, air brakes, and air suspension, while adding features that buses did not offer, such as front mounted generators, mid-entry doors, and operational systems that are built into the body and chassis during the manufacturing process. Thus Newell offered more flexibility to custom build to the client's preferences.

Much like building a conventional home, customers at Newell are ushered into a state of the art design studio where the process begins. There they can pick everything from the carpet and tile to the counter tops, faucets and wall colors. It is even more customized than many



conventional homes in that they also choose custom drapes, upholstery fabrics, accent pillows, furniture style, and just about any high tech electronics you can think of. And because they have their own CAD professionals who generate the coach's blue prints and plans as one goes through the design process, the project is a virtual work in progress from start to finish. You dream it, they create it!

As I was given the VIP tour of their manufacturing facility, I was amazed that so much beauty and style could be created with a relatively small staff. Solely manufactured in Miami, there are 204 employees ranging from management and administrative staff, to welders and fitters, to interior designers and CAD professionals, to fabricators and electricians, to the installers of the granite kitchen counters. According to Lawson, "These are true craftsmen, the best at what they do."

Each coach goes through a 13 phase construction process that starts with a length of steel between two saw horses. During construction, there are 13 coaches in various stages of completion at any one time. As one completed coach is delivered to its eagerly anticipating new owner, another is just beginning to take shape on the front end. Each construction phase

takes approximately 50 man hours to complete and it takes about three and one half months to complete a

complete with sight seeing ports of call, ending in New Orleans. How's that for an innovative vacation?



coach from saw horse to customer delivery. Annually, 40+ coaches complete the manufacturing process that ends with finishes, detailing and road testing before the keys are handed over.

Discriminating customers from all over the world choose Newell coaches because of their innovative approach to giving a customer exactly what they want. Coach owners are so proud of their homes on wheels that they have an owner's organization that holds annual events. One such event that caught my attention was where 70 coaches, lined up on a 742-foot barge on the Mississippi River, took a float trip

Mr. Newell's philosophy remains the cornerstone of Newell Coach Corporation to this day. They continue to lead the industry with their innovative style, attention to detail, quality customer service and second to none coaches.

Happy 40th, Newell Coach, and continued success. You truly are a jewel in Northeast Oklahoma's manufacturing crown!

You may contact Cynthia Neely-Pulliam, Business Services Coordinator for the Northeast Oklahoma Workforce Investment Board at cynthia.pulliam@oesc.state.ok.us ❖



Newell Coach

SUPERIOR FABRICATION, INC.



Superior Fabrication, Inc., better known as SFI, is fast approaching 10 years of customer oriented services. We are located in Elk City, Oklahoma, the heart of the Anadarko Basin Oil & Gas field. During the past 10 years, SFI has grown from 9 employees to over 150 employees with plans to continue growing with a future move to a new 56,000 square foot facility. In 2004, SFI opened a plant in Canadian, Texas. We have expanded into other affiliated businesses, such as Superior Energy, Superior

Trucking, Superior Lube, Superior Valves and Controls, and Superior Health and Fitness.

Terry Morse, CEO, and Mike Fields, President, had the same vision when they began SFI; to provide quality products to valued customers. SFI has delivered vessels worldwide, specializing in new and reconditioned production equipment.

Like many industries today, SFI was faced with a shortage of welders in Oklahoma so we took a step ahead and developed our own welder's training program in November

2006. SPEC, or "Superior People making an Excellent Company", utilizes the Western Technology Center and Southwestern Oklahoma State University to assist in this training program. SFI is truly greatly thankful for all their generosity and support. We incorporated WorkKeys Assessment as part of the training program to help evaluate existing skill levels and provide KeyTrain to those employees who desire to improve their skills. The result is a well trained employee whose skills are documented with a Career Readiness Certificate, or CRC. Each course provides a maximum of five trainees who receive 200 hours of specialized skills development including: Theories of Welding, Blueprints and Tools, Safety, Softskills, Overview of Welding Equipment, and Practical of Welding. We are currently in our third class and are very excited and proud about our SPEC Program.

SFI takes great pride and believe in our employees. They are responsible for setting us apart from our competitors and are committed in providing top quality products. Our employees play a crucial part in our success and truly work as a team.

For more information about Superior Fabrication, please visit our website at

www.superiorfabrication.com. ♦

OKLAHOMA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

Oklahoma Hospital Association members from southern Oklahoma participated in the Health Care Industry Regional Consortium meeting, held in January at Mercy Memorial Health Center, Ardmore. This was a follow-up meeting to the Regional Health Care Summit, hosted by the Southern Workforce (Investment) Board in October. Representatives met to continue developing a strategic plan to address the health care workforce shortages in that area of the state. Left to right are Danny Hale, Director of Human Resources and Education, Mercy Memorial; Sheryl McLain, Interim Executive Director, Health Care Workforce Resources Center, and OHA Vice President/Workforce Initiatives; Ron Webb, CEO, Valley View Regional Hospital, Ada; Carri Moore Colwell, Southern Workforce Board, and Terry Watson, Director, Office of Workforce Solutions, Oklahoma Department of Commerce. ♦



FREE SAFETY CONSULTATION

Have you ever heard of the Oklahoma Department of Labor's (ODOL) OSHA Consultation program?

This program offers voluntary, non-punitive, confidential and free safety and health consultation services to private employers across the state.

These services are geared toward helping companies develop and implement effective safety and health management programs that will result in:

1. The elimination of identified hazards which cause injuries or could result in Federal OSHA fines
2. Lower workers' compensation costs
3. Reduced injury and illness rates
4. Improved employee morale
5. Reduced turnover rates
6. An improved bottom line that frees money to be reinvested in the business
7. \$1,000 tax exemption for a full service visit

So, what does a safety and health consultation include? Well, it depends on the company's needs. Generally, once a company makes a request for services, a safety consultant and a health consultant are each assigned to work with the company. These consultants will make an onsite visit to the company. They will assess the company's overall safety and health management system, review written programs, perform a walk through

of the facility to identify recognized hazards and, if needed, the industrial hygienist can perform noise and/or air monitoring. Each consultant then prepares a written report that lists all findings, recommendations for improvement and a list of hazards found during the walk through.

Did you also know that through the utilization of ODOL's consultation services, your company may be able to participate in either the SHARP or WCPR programs?

The Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP) is available to employers who are interested in successfully developing, implementing and maintaining an effective safety and health management program. A major plus for this program is participating companies maintain incident rates below the national average for their industry. Successful participants in this program are exempt from scheduled Federal OSHA inspections as long as they remain SHARP certified.

The Workers' Compensation Premium Reduction (WCPR) program is also available to small employers who are insured through a private insurance company or CompSource

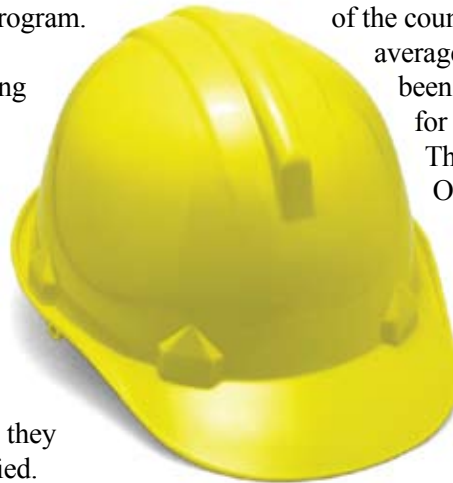
Oklahoma and have experience modifiers greater than 1.0. Successful participants in this program develop, implement and maintain effective safety and health management programs and show at least a 10% reduction in the dollar amount or severity of their claims from the previous year or reduce their incident rates to the national average or reduce their rates by one-third of the amount they exceeded it by the previous year. Once certified a company is eligible for up to a 15% discount on their workers' compensation premium.

The ODOL OSHA Consultation program is working! The latest injury and illness data found Oklahoma's rate – traditionally higher than the rest of the country – at the national average. In fact, the rate has been steadily dropping for the last decade.

This is good news for Oklahoma's workers and businesses.

If you have any questions about the ODOL OSHA Consultation program or would like to request a consultation, contact the Oklahoma

Department of Labor at (405) 528-1500 ext. 276 or toll free at 1 (888) 269-5353 ext. 276. ♦



SOUTH CENTRAL OKLAHOMA WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

On February 7, 2007 the South Central Oklahoma Workforce Investment Board Youth Council hosted an Area Educators' Youth Symposium at the Simmons Center in Duncan, inviting all high school guidance counselors, principals, and superintendents from its eight county service delivery area to attend. The day's events included presentations from the Duncan Police Department, KeyTrain, WorkKeys, and Chickasha Public Schools. During the lunch, which was sponsored by KeyTrain and WorkKeys, the Youth Council presented Chickasha High School Superintendent Jim Glaze with a plaque for the school's innovative and dedicated approach to promoting the career development of its students. The day was concluded with a keynote presentation by noted author and community trainer James Vollbracht. ♦





FREIGHTLINER

Tim Sinor believes some choices matter more than others. When his customers are shopping for a recreational towing truck, it's a big decision. And when he's exploring ways to grow his business, it's a choice with sweeping implications.

"We like to think our philosophy is pretty simple," said Sinor, president of Freightliner Specialty Vehicles. "We leverage the best equipment and technology for the best quality and innovation... Baby boomers have worked to afford themselves a lavish retirement. When they decide they want a vehicle like ours, they are looking to buy the very best—and their choice is us."

Sinor's factory in Clinton produces a SportChassis line of luxury towing vehicles. It is the market leader, selling the \$100,000 trucks to people hauling classic cars, high-price horses or other expensive trailers.

"People towing more than 14,000 pounds are looking for a truck like ours," Sinor said. "Our customers are carrying exotic cars and pricey off-

shore boats. A lot of our customers are hauling trailers with expensive show horses—cutters and jumpers."

Studies show 75 percent of fifth-wheel trailer owners are towing with a one-ton pickup and many are exceeding the weight limit for their vehicles. "Our trucks are safer than a normal one-ton in several ways. Probably most important, the brakes on a SportChassis are twice as big as the brakes on a one-ton pickup. That means the SportChassis can get the trailer going quickly and can also stop the trailer fast to avoid those white-knuckle situations. However, you don't need a commercial driver's license since our trucks don't have air brakes and are less than 26,000 pounds."

SportChassis vehicles are decked out with the latest amenities. Freightliner customizes each interior with options like flat-screen televisions, DVD players, navigation systems, back-up cameras and state-of-the-art audio. The cabs are completed with leather seats and wood-trim finishes.

The business started in 1994 as Sinor Manufacturing Company, producing ambulances and rescue vehicles. Sinor's family has provided ambulance service to dozens of towns in western Oklahoma for more than 40 years. He opened the Clinton plant in part to help off-set the cost of vehicle purchases for that family business. Because of the long production schedule for an ambulance or rescue truck—sometimes up to 120 days—Sinor decided the factory could manufacture a "fun" vehicle to balance the long lead times.

"Recreation towing vehicles seemed to fit that bill," Sinor said. "As a result, we designed what became the SportChassis and production began in early 1997." In 1998 Freightliner, a division of Daimler-Chrysler, acquired controlling interest in the company and relaunched it as Freightliner Specialty Vehicles. In 2002, Freightliner moved production of emergency vehicles and left the Clinton factory to manufacture only the SportChassis line. Sinor remained as president. He continues as the

company's driving force behind product development and production improvements.

"We very much believe in better and efficient design and use of

few months. For station cycle time, it was six hours at the beginning of the year, it will be around two hours for each station at the end of the year."

Walenciak is one of 20



materials," said Billy McCullers, production manager. "With the combination of our skillful craftsmen, engineers, and our top-of-the-range machinery and technology, it makes the SportChassis a driver's paradise. During manufacturing, our engineers ensure that quality and performance are the main concerns as the truck goes through several stages of production."

That production has more than doubled in the past year since the factory began a transformation to Lean Manufacturing. The plant now produces about 50 vehicles a month, up from 25 at the end of 2005. More remarkable: cycle time is now four days, down from the two weeks it took just a year ago.

"Of all the Lean transformations I've seen, this is the most impressive," said Paul Walenciak, a manufacturing extension agent for the Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance. "This is a progressive operation in all business aspects and it shows in the overwhelming improvements they have made in just a

manufacturing extension agents working in communities across Oklahoma. He is sponsored locally by Southwestern Oklahoma State University and Western Technology Center. He has worked with Argent Global Services, a private consulting firm, to organize a series of Kaizen implementation projects at the Freightliner factory.

"We used to manufacture with a traditional batch-production system," McCullers said. "We now have a single-unit flow. Instead of pushing a cart full of pieces through the entire process, we now have point-of-use at each of the assembly stations. Our goal is to only build what we need. About 70 percent of our parts are now at point of use. An empty cart is the simple queue for new pieces. Small bites of time from each station can add up to a significant reduction in cycle time at the end of the manufacturing process."

A truck used to take 13 trips through the paint department. With the single flow, a truck now moves just once through painting. That eliminated not only a significant chunk of time, but literally miles of travel distance.

The SportChassis is available in six basic colors, but the company has become quite famous for its custom paint jobs and other specialty body parts.

Capital investments also played a role in increasing efficiencies. "Things like a new routing machine are making a huge difference," McCullers said. "It is 60 percent faster. That speed eliminated a bottleneck that was slowing production at that station and every assembly point down the line. Now, out of a single sheet of aluminum, we will cut all the different pieces needed for a production point."

Sinor also has invested in his workforce. He is quick to give credit to the Freightliner employees, now numbering about 107. "Everyone shares in the pride," he said. "It always comes down to the people and it's amazing the ideas we generated once we got everybody involved. We've incorporated all of our employees throughout the transformation. We realize they are our most important asset and let them know they are part of our family." Walenciak helped secure training grants for the company's new employees through Western Technology Center. Adding new employees helped Freightliner qualify for the state's Quality Jobs Incentive program. Walenciak coordinated the application process. Manufacturing extension agents like Walenciak serve as liaisons for the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and offer interested companies free one-on-one consultations. They work with manufacturers through every step of the process. For companies that meet certain requirements, the Quality Jobs Incentive program gives quarterly cash rebates of up to 5 percent of taxable wages for up to 10 years.

"Oklahoma's successful Quality Jobs Incentive program promotes job growth and helps improve a company's bottom line by injecting cash back into the business as it expands and

creates new employment,” Walenciak said. “It is one of several state incentives available to manufacturers. An important part of what I do is making sure that companies like Freightliner take advantage of all the opportunities available to them.”

Freightliner is in the early stages of work with its suppliers, many of which are local Oklahoma firms. It’s an effort to help them keep up with elevated production schedules. “Most of our suppliers are still trying to forecast our use and batch produce parts. We are slowly helping them Lean their production. We used to hand cut the tinting used on windows. Now we get those pieces pre-cut from the vendor. We are taking baby steps with them—but that’s where we started.”

Even with Freightliner’s boost in output, the company isn’t matching public demand for the vehicles. “All of our slots are sold out for about a year with orders from dealers. We have companies that want to be dealers, but we have to delay that because there is such a great demand from our current customers.” A reputation for dazzling aesthetics and high-end quality has turned SportChassis into a dominant brand. Features like the patented Passive Noise Reduction System help define the superiority. “A special insulation system makes them one of the quietest vehicles on the road and, by far, the quietest in its class. It’s not quite a Mercedes, but it’s close,” McCullers said. “It helps take it from a truck to a luxury vehicle and most competitors don’t drill down to that level of detail. We work from aviation specs and tolerances—way above what is necessary.”

And the high-priced trucks are a bargain, Sinor added.

“Our luxury towing trucks are rated for more than a million miles of driving. At 250,000 miles, a SportChassis retains 60 percent of its value. Your normal pickup would essentially have no value



at a quarter-million miles. So while there’s a bigger up-front cost, you come out ahead as you approach a million miles of use.”

Sinor is always working on a new prototype because, “people like things that are new and innovative.” His newest design is essentially a pickup on steroids. The P2 is a super-sized, four-door truck that Sinor acknowledges has little practical value. “It’s a big-boy toy with a pickup bed,” he said. “But it can pull up to 20,000 pounds from the bumper and is like testosterone for the guy who drives it—it’s just cool.” Requests for the pickups are through the roof and Freightliner literally can’t build them fast enough.

That demand

is part of why Sinor remains optimistic about his company’s future. “Our goal is not a radical increase in sales,” he said. “We want to control growth by integrating the production efficiencies we’ve introduced over the past year. I’ve always prided myself on building the best and most innovative product. That has not changed, but Lean Manufacturing has allowed us to do that and grow the business. Without Lean we could not stay competitive—it’s wonderful to see manufacturing theories that work. I’ve been amazed.” ♦

MADE IN OKLAHOMA

The Made In Oklahoma (MIO) coalition is accepting entries to its second annual Recipe Roundup Contest. Seven finalists will be chosen and the ultimate winner will receive a \$7000 KitchenAid™ appliance makeover.

"The contest is open to original recipes that feature at least two MIO company products," said Mindy Koenig, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry marketing coordinator. "The coalition's goals for the contest are to promote Oklahoma products and encourage people to find new ways to prepare them."

Category specifications for the contest include "Mouth Watering Main Entrees," "Dig in Desserts" and in honor of the state's centennial celebration, "Authentic 100-Year-Old Recipes." The grand prize winner will be selected by a panel of celebrity

media judges.

Rules for the contest are simple: Ingredients and specific preparation directions must be included in the

e-mail address if available, recipe name, and category.

Entry forms, contest rules and a complete list of MIO companies are available online at www.miocoalition.com or send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: MIO Coalition Recipe Roundup 2007, PO Box 54386, Oklahoma City, OK 73154. Entries must be received or postmarked by May 10 and received by May 15.

In addition to the kitchen makeover grand prize, runner-up prizes include KitchenAid™ stand mixers, a family weekend retreat at the Tatanka Ranch, and an "Oklahoma State Parks Getaway" provided by Oklahoma State Parks.

Last year's grand prize winner was Mary Shivers of Ada.

For More Information Contact: Mindy Koenig (405) 522-5601 or Jack Carson (405) 522-4575 ♦



LOCAL INVOLVEMENT WITH THE SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (SHRM)

Joan Barker, Director of the Cleveland County Workforce Development Board, Inc., and Lisa Graven, System Coordinator of the Cleveland County Workforce Investment Board recently became members of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). SHRM is the world's largest association devoted to human resource management. Founded in 1948, SHRM was created in an effort to provide continued professional development opportunities, promote national networking and to generally advance the interests of the profession. After attaining her Professional in Human Resources (PHR) certification, Barker joined SHRM in January of 2007 with hopes that participation will help her to understand the needs of her business customers and allow her to perform better in her human resource capacity.

Currently, SHRM boasts more than 550 affiliated chapters and members in more than 100 countries. An Oklahoma affiliate of SHRM, Sooner Human Resources Society (SHRS), is recognized as the sixth fastest growing chapter in the nation. Graven recently joined both SHRM and SHRS and will serve on the Workforce Readiness Committee. As new members, both Graven and Barker have attended one meeting thus far, but say they look forward to becoming active members. ♦



For a business to thrive, it needs strong roots.

The unique challenges facing businesses today change as quickly as the seasons. Steady business growth requires both strength and agility... not just in capital resources, but in human resources as well. A trained, high-quality workforce is critical to Oklahoma's success.

Along with the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce helps bridge the connection between economic development, education and workforce. It's just one of our strategies for accelerating economic growth; after all, an investment in Oklahoma's talent is an investment in Oklahoma's future.



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From the Governor's Council

As Administrative Manager of Woodward Iodine Corporation, I have witnessed some positive changes since the implementation of the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development. One is the increased awareness by private industry of the local Workforce Centers and the services that are available. As a member of the manufacturing industry, we have witnessed the available workforce pool shrink over the last few years, partially as a result of the increased demand for personnel by the oil and gas industry. To our advantage, the local Workforce Centers allow our company to draw from applicants nation wide rather than just those reached by the local newspaper's circulation.

I have also seen a shift in the attitude of the general workforce...the level of work ethic. It is a continuing struggle to find applicants who will arrive at work on time, give enough notice if they are going to be absent, and realize that their performance affects the profitability of the company and ultimately their income. Our plant operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. Without our employees, there is no

product and no revenue. So, we are facing a two-fold problem: a shortage of workers and a shortage of job skills.

This problem is not unique to our industry, however, with Oklahoma employers facing this challenge daily. During this our centennial year, the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development is facing this challenge with a monumental strategic plan to "Grow Oklahoma" by increasing the number of available workers and by increasing the knowledge, skills, and education attainment level of all Oklahomans.

Membership on the Governor's Council enables the members of private industry and public leaders to network and share ideas with each other. This collaboration also creates a truly integrated workforce and economic development emphasis.

There is a continuing struggle to maintain a strong presence of business members on the local Workforce Investment Boards. Time constraints, increased workloads and "not wanting to get involved" in another commitment remain to be deterrents. The reason I continue to stay involved at the state and local level is the

need for qualified employees to maintain existing business and attract new business. I would encourage you to get involved with your local Workforce Investment Board, as well, because I believe that Oklahoma works!



Bill Gerber
Woodward Iodine
Woodward, OK
Member, GCWED



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