

NEWS RELEASE



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For immediate release

LEAN LEARNING CENTER HELPS AUTOMATIC FEED COMPANY PUSH LEAN INITIATIVE TO NEW LEVEL

Commitment to standardization has evolved into complete lean transformation program

Novi, Mich., April 1, 2005 – The Lean Learning Center, a provider of lean curriculum and consulting, has announced that it is helping Automatic Feed Company (Napoleon, Ohio), a leading designer and manufacturer of coil handling and press feeding automation systems, in its commitment to enterprise-wide lean transformation.

Automatic Feed began a product standardization program in the late 1990s with a focus on developing system simplification and delivering cost-reduction. That has now evolved into a full-blown lean transformation effort, which Automatic Feed has dubbed the SMART (Standardization & Modularization Action Resource Team) Initiative. “You’ll see a lot of companies take lean manufacturing to just one area of a company,” says Kim Beck, president of Automatic Feed. “Our approach to lean has become all-encompassing. We want to drive waste from all aspects of our business and have turned to the Lean Learning Center to help us -- not only with changing the methods, procedures and tools we use -- but also with changing the whole mindset of our team members. We realize that this is the only way we can achieve the results we’re looking for.”

Automatic Feed’s appointed lean team receive regular guidance from Lean Learning Center personnel. In addition, they have attended the Lean Kaizen Boot Camp program offered by the Center, an intensive course that includes three days at a selected manufacturing company site and two days at the Center. The company has also run a

number of on-site Kaizen events at its own facility. Through these activities, Automatic Feed has developed the skills to direct these events internally.

“As we work with Automatic Feed on a number of levels, we want to make sure the company does more than acquire information on lean,” says Lean Learning Center partner Jamie Flinchbaugh. “We want to help them internalize lean thinking. The entire organization -- from manufacturing to sales -- must be able to think lean in order to eliminate waste on an ongoing basis.”

Automatic Feed's lean leaders – or SMART facilitators -- are both engineering- and shop floor-oriented. They are reorganizing processes, standardizing procedures and cross-training all personnel to fundamentally change the way they do business. One of the most significant achievements of the SMART Initiative is the introduction of a new Dedicated Device Architecture controls process, which has reduced system wiring content by 66 percent in addition to being flexible enough to comply with the control system requirements of any OEM.

“Because of all the different parts involved in our business, lean initiatives at Automatic Feed have historically been a struggle,” continues Beck. “However, with guidance from the Lean Learning Center, we’ve already made considerable strides and are looking forward to even greater results in the future.”

END

Notes to editors:

The Lean Learning Center was founded in early 2001 to address the gaps and barriers that are holding back companies from successful lean transformation. In combination with corporate partner Achievement Dynamics, a provider of management consulting, the companies provide a full complement of lean transformation services. Industries served include manufacturing, healthcare, public utilities, retail, aerospace, communications, technology, investment equity, service and more. To request a curriculum brochure or for more information, call 248-478-1480 or visit www.leanlearningcenter.com.

Automatic Feed Company is a leading manufacturer of coil handling and press feeding automation systems. Privately owned and located in Napoleon, Ohio, Automatic Feed serves major U.S. and Japanese automakers with customized turnkey systems and comprehensive project management. For more information, visit www.automaticfeed.com.