

Illinois Plastic Injection Molding company implements 5S Workplace Organization and Kaizen to eliminate wastes, improve productivity and efficiency, and boost employee satisfaction.

Situation

The Workplace organization is the key to success in any industry. Aztec Plastic Company, a Plastic Injection Molding, Contract Manufacturing, and Assembly company saw an opportunity to improve the organization and flow of the workspace in their machining area. In an effort to set and maintain new standards that would eliminate wasted time, space, and inventory, and create an environment where employees can participate in continuous improvement activities, Aztec Plastic Company engaged Lean experts at IMEC.

Solution

After understanding what Aztec Plastic wanted to accomplish and assessing their workspace, IMEC conducted a Focused 5S Workplace Organization training and Kaizen that was conducted over 2.5 days with 6-10 Aztec Plastic team members. 5S is intended to ultimately improve product quality and worker output, resulting in reduced cost and increased efficiencies. This training began with teaching the Aztec Plastic team the basic concepts of 5S – Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, and Sustain (along with Safety), including visual techniques to communicate progress and countermeasures.

First, they sorted all the items present in the machining area within the Injection Molding Division into three categories: frequently used that need immediate access, periodically used – items in this group are labeled to identify its purpose, and no longer needed items. Once everything was categorized appropriately, they moved on to setting them up in an orderly fashion with each item allocated to a specific home. Next, the team spent time making sure that all the equipment, tools, and workbenches in the area are clean and made to shine. To keep the area consistently organized, they implemented methods and procedures that would standardize the improvements. In final stage of the 5S training, the team defined roles and responsibilities to sustain the new way of life in the new workspace.

In addition to the 5S principle, the team also learned how to apply visual techniques to help communicate the plan, progress, and countermeasures. These included shadow boards to organize tools and items in the area, labels to maintain visual order, visual procedures to assist in performing processes in a specific area, and visual measures to track performance.

Since 2.5 days only allows so much time to properly implement 5S and Kaizen, an action plan was created with assigned responsibilities to the Aztec Plastic team with expected completion dates to ensure that all changes are implemented.

With all the tools and tooling components readily available, employees are now able to complete their jobs more efficiently. As a result, Aztec Plastic Company is noticing improved productivity and reduced waste, while also seeing an increase in employee satisfaction!

Results

- Anticipated New and Retained Sales: **\$1,100,00**
- Anticipated Cost Savings: **\$165,000**
- Anticipated New Investments: **\$70,000**
- New and Retained Jobs: **15**

"I cannot say enough about IMEC. As a small business in Manufacturing, it can feel lonely. IMEC, in just a short amount of time, has provided expertise, funding, and guidance on pretty much every facet of our manufacturing business. We have been in business for 52 years, and it took us about 49 to engage with IMEC; I wish we wouldn't have waited so long."

Andrew Wielgus, COO, Aztec Plastic Company