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## **MassMEP and L-3 Communications Henschel Inc. Produce Profitable Returns**

**NEWBURYPORT, MA** - From submarines, to destroyers, all the way up to the largest air craft carriers, you can't find a United States Naval vessel today that's operating without equipment manufactured by L-3 Communications Henschel, Inc. of Newburyport, Massachusetts.

For almost 90 years, L-3 Communications Henschel has been manufacturing communications equipment for the shipping industry, and the company's relationship with the U.S. Navy dates back to World War II, when it received awards for its support of the war effort.

With such a long history of supplying the shipping industry, L-3 Communications Henschel often receives equipment that has been in service for an extensive period of time and needs repairs. Because it is such a time consuming process to repair older equipment, one that takes manpower away from other core jobs, items in need of repair were sent to a section of the plant called the Return Material Authorization Area (RMA), where they would sit and wait.

To help make the RMA area more efficient and less of a drain on precious time and resources, L-3 Communications Henschel turned to the Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MassMEP).

"As we analyzed things, we started to see the RMA area as a business within a business," said David Hess, MassMEP project manager.

**(more)**



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Hess and his MassMEP team used Lean Manufacturing to change the way work was processed in the RMA and produced dramatic improvements. Lean Manufacturing is an implementation technique that utilizes simple but effective methods that identify and reduce waste and inventories, clear shop floors and streamline production processes all with a goal of decreasing costs and increasing productivity.

"The RMA space was reorganized three times to decrease the physical area parts traveled through the repair process," said Hess. "When we started, parts would move 800 feet along a repair process. By working together with L-3 Communications Henschel, we reduced the process to less than 50 feet, creating a 250 percent increase in capacity."

Further improvements include giving job orders a visual identity. A schedule card with a date is put on a magnet board that is a direct replica of what's on the shelf. The board visually reinforces the order in which the job should be completed, and shows exactly what parts are available for the specific task.

"The implementation of Lean Manufacturing changed this company's operations," said Seth Traub, L-3 Communications Henschel Inc. vice president of operations. "Employees now challenge the long-time processes and work with management to streamline the operations, improve productivity and increase company profits."

"The RMA work is going so well that we just started taking on work from other companies," said Traub. "It's a continuous improvement process. A week hasn't gone by where we haven't made changes, and now we're taking a broader look at the entire factory and the way we do business. I would highly recommend that all companies consider Lean Manufacturing techniques."

The MassMEP is an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP system is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2,000 manufacturing and business "coaches" whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits and enhanced global competitiveness. For more information, please visit [www.massmep.org](http://www.massmep.org), and click on the New England Manufacturing Supply Chain link, or phone 508-831-7020.

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