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## **East Walpole Manufacturer Updating its R&D Program with Strategic Help from the Mass MEP**

*Hollingsworth & Vose Program Aimed at Streamlining Operations at Worldwide Locations*

**East Walpole, MA** - East Walpole based manufacturer, Hollingsworth & Vose Company, is an international leader in the development and manufacturing of specialty papers and nonwovens that benefit the air people breathe, the cars they drive, the clothes they wear, and the places they live and work.

Part of what drives the company's success is its Research and Development (R&D) effort. While the company has been successfully developing products to meet customer needs for over 160 years, executives at Hollingsworth & Vose recognized a need to streamline and revitalize its R&D process in order to fight off growing competition.

The company brought in the Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MassMEP) to help identify opportunities for changing the basic development process to make it more effective. With support from a U.S. Department of Labor High Skills Training Grant, project managers with the MassMEP Innovation Program, conducted what is referred to as an Enterprise Assessment and Technology Road-mapping project specifically focused on the R&D and product development process. The assessment process is an intensive three-day investigation which rapidly uncovers issues and opportunities, enabling the company to identify specific areas that need change and includes a plan for executing the changes.

"We start with research and look at everything, including background financial and strategic business plans, followed by a series of interviews with key personnel, and then we develop a series of findings and implications that help the company improve their business operation," said Wayne Sula, MassMEP project manager. "At Hollingsworth & Vose we found that they do a good job of product development but we identified ways we could help them transform the R&D process so they could get those products to market in a more timely fashion."

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Based on the MassMEP findings, the company has started to implement the recommendations by dedicating a team to develop a formal product development process. The process includes specific check points to assess the process or help them determine if the project isn't meeting goals and should be discontinued. Hollingsworth & Vose is also considering implementing a Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) software program to better coordinate the R&D and product development process and increase knowledge sharing across its divisions.

"For those companies struggling with age old paradigms and looking for an opportunity to transform themselves, the MassMEP assessment provides a rapid-fire and cost effective approach to setting the course for those efforts," said Doug Klauber, VP of Technology, Hollingsworth & Vose. "Ultimately we believe our work with the MassMEP will enable our R&D teams to develop and bring new products to the marketplace with increased speed and minimal waste."

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), or phone 1-800-MEP-4MFG.

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