

**For Immediate Release**  
**March 27, 2006**

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**Improvements at FLEXcon Help Offset Rising Energy Costs**  
*MassMEP Lean Manufacturing Techniques Also Help Improve On-Time Delivery*

If you've driven a Ford lately, drank a bottle of Bud Lite or used self-adhesive postage stamps, you have come into contact with products made by FLEXcon. At its main plant in Spencer, Massachusetts, the 50 year-old company manufactures pressure sensitive films and adhesives for more than 1,000 products.

Determined to make the future of FLEXcon as successful as its past, top executives from the company are always looking for ways to maintain their competitive edge. After attending a Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MassMEP) Lean Manufacturing simulation training, FLEXcon's management team decided to implement Lean at the company.

Lean is a manufacturing technique that uses simple, but effective methods to eliminate waste and reduce manufacturing costs, and as a result, increase productivity.

In manufacturing, materials and energy costs can have a dramatic impact on a company's bottom line and the savings FLEXcon experienced couldn't have come at a better time, helping to offset business expenses that soared along with rising energy costs.

"The timing of FLEXcon's completing our Lean initiatives coincided with skyrocketing energy, raw materials and fuel costs. Had we not implemented Lean when we did, the increasing prices would have hindered our business substantially," said Tom Kubacki, FLEXcon director of coating technology and production control.

MassMEP Project Manager Steve Szydlowski, also worked with FLEXcon's human resources department to secure a Massachusetts Workforce Training Fund grant to continue to conduct training and improvement projects.

With the additional funding, FLEXcon focused on improving a number of areas including drastically improving on-time product delivery in their Slitting Department which is now averaging close to 100 percent on-time delivery.

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Using another Lean technique called Value Stream Mapping that maps the flow of a product family through the production process, FLEXcon identified several areas to make upgrades that would improve delivery time. The Value Stream Map identified a lack of visual scheduling of production needs that led to bottlenecks and delays.

“This is a great example of how the simple changes brought about through Lean implementation can help a company increase production and improve on-time delivery while cutting costs,” said Szydlowski.

The success in the Slitting Department has initiated a similar project that is now underway in the Pressure Sensitive Department to reduce waste in that area. An initial project on one machine in the Pressure Sensitive Department has resulted in a 30 percent decrease in waste, a significant cost savings for the company.

Several other Lean projects are now underway in other departments at FLEXcon and the company is planning to implement Lean at its Nebraska plant.

“Lean training and implementation has been great for FLEXcon because it is often so simplistic that many of your answers were right there in front of you,” said Howard Letendre, Director of Finishing Technology at FLEXcon. “The MassMEP helped us identify and implement improvements that have had a positive result on our work and the bottom line of our company.”

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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