

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

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## **MassMEP Weaves Lean 101 Concepts into Fine Linens Manufacturer's New Plant**

*John Matouk and Company increases productivity and cuts man-hours while creating fashionable, state-of-the art facility*

**Fall River, MA** – John Matouk and Company has been making some of the world's most luxurious linens for more than 70 years. Now a third generation business, the family remains committed to John Matouk's vision of designing and manufacturing fine quality products, maintaining its position as an industry leader in a facility that is as fun as it is functional.

Recently, the company moved their main manufacturing and distribution operation to a new facility in Fall River, Massachusetts and George Matouk Jr., the current President and CEO, wanted to use the move as an opportunity to set up the new plant to function in the most efficient way possible. After obtaining an Industrial Development Bond through Mass Development, The Association Industries of Massachusetts (AIM) referred him to the Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MassMEP) for assistance with the plant layout.

“We wanted to focus on making the necessary changes to avoid bottlenecks during production and improve on-time delivery to customers,” said Matouk. “At the same time, we wanted an optimal production environment that was as spacious and bright as it was functional.”

Under the guidance of Glenn Gertridge, lead project manager of the Mass MEP, a core group of twelve supervisory employees participated in Lean 101 sessions. Lean is a technique that uses basic but effective concepts to identify and help reduce waste and increase productivity.

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“After completing the lean training, the group then began value stream mapping, which maps the existing factory’s product and process flow and helps a company determine a more efficient layout,” said Gertridge. “They were able to store large rolls of fabric in the new facility, as opposed to a separate off site warehouse, making the raw materials accessible to everyone. Now there’s even room for expansion, if needed in the future.”

The task of developing the new factory layout was driven by a process known as Systematic Layout Planning, which is a systematic, data driven detailed process that is focused on developing the most effective and efficient facility layout possible. The project involved a team of Matouk employees working with Gertridge over a period of weeks to develop a new detailed facility layout.

The company also purchased special air cushioned tables to make stacked fabric easier to move, and easier to cut. The bar coded work orders are scanned periodically so that the orders can be located at any time. The new programmable embroidery machine can embroider several pieces at one time, freeing up employees to do more intricate and custom work. The completed linens are then stored in the opposite end of the warehouse from where the fabric is kept. The new layout allows work to travel in a circle, reducing the distance work in progress travels, resulting in a 10 percent increase in productivity while cutting man-hours per week by the same amount.

When the plant layout was complete, architects needed to do some fine-tuning, and the MassMEP left them with the tools needed to produce some remarkable results. The walls are painted in pastel tones, the lighting is bright, and the environment is comfortable. The employees even have new colorful, stylish furnishings in the lunchroom.

“The new environment seems to have been inspirational,” adds Matouk. “Morale is high, the surroundings are pleasant, and the employees really feel they had a voice in the way the new facility was laid out. The MassMEP has really enabled us to build a production department environment that was truly optimal for the product line. They brought forward a level of expertise to assist us in dealing with our specific problems that we never would have been able to afford or find otherwise.”

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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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