

In FY2021, Polaris MEP helped keep >1,500 Rhode Islanders at good jobs, with good wages, making what matters.

40,000

RI manufacturing employment
as of April 2021

8%

of total private, non-farm jobs in RI
as of April 2021

\$23.90

Average RI manufacturing hourly
wage as of April 2021



May started strong with Small Business Week, and in RI our small manufacturers continued to show why they're critical to the economy. Earnings and hours in the sector increased, and manufacturing employers were recognized by varied groups including the Small Business Administration, Hispanic Chamber and the Providence Business News for their leadership. Let's schedule a time to visit with a manufacturer in your district. (508-523-5498; kmahoney@polarismep.org).

Kathie Mahoney, Center Director

HONORS & HEADLINES

- Cheryl Merchant of Taco Comfort Solutions receives Business Women Career Achievement award
- Katrinkles founder Katherine Westcott honored with Entrepreneurial Excellence award from SCORE/SBA
- Naragansett Brewery ranked in top 50 producing craft brewers in US
- Chi Kitchen's Minnie Luong quoted in Wall Street Journal on supply chain issues, rising prices
- Former Polaris MEP Director Christian Cowan addresses technology and innovation gap in Boston Globe
- Polyurethane leader Mearthane acquires Michigan-based plastics maker
- Rhode Island Spirits "Rhodium Forager Gin" wins World Gold Medal

OUR CURRENT/RECENT INITIATIVES

- 20 trainees completed Fast Track to CNC Manufacturing and entering the workforce. Read the story at <https://go.polarismep.org/CNCtraining>
Since the program launched in 2017, more than 150 previously unemployed or underemployed state residents have been trained and placed in manufacturing jobs
- 11 companies receiving individual coaching through Scale Up! RI, a joint commercialization initiative with 401 Tech Bridge
- Machine & Marine wage/training reimbursements of more than \$XX to XX companies
- Polaris MEP is expanding advisory board, seeking members with passion & diverse experiences
- Supplier matchmaking for new resources and sales growth across the US
- New services including leadership training, ESL and safety planning introduced
- Automation readiness service launched



We have a lot of respect for the project managers and the team that are at Polaris MEP because of the results they have helped us achieve.

Pat McNiff, Founder
Pat's Pastured



33% decrease in
labor expense



5.5 hrs processing
time/week decrease



[Polaris MEP] always wants to learn about the needs of your customers and wants to help you do better for them. It's not just 'okay' – we've worked with you for your certification, we'll see you in a year.' That's what set you guys apart.

Renay Curran, Vice President/CFO
R&R Machine Industries



2 skilled
jobs added



17 jobs
retained



\$9,950 in
investments

TAG! SIGN MANUFACTURER FINDS KAIZEN IS “IT” FOR TRANSFORMATION AND GROWTH

COMPANY PROFILE

National Marker Company (NMC), a subsidiary of Justrite Safety Group, manufactures high-quality safety identification products. The Rhode Island company has been helping make the world “a little bit safer” since 1934. The company serves a variety of markets that require support with workplace safety, including the construction industry.

SITUATION

The company had experienced rapid sales growth by becoming an industry leader in product quality and lead times. To support this growth, operations in Rhode Island needed to be at peak efficiency, freeing financial resources, and physical capacity. This growth was achieved by investing in technology and talent, embracing Lean Manufacturing principles and tools.

Tags produced at the North Smithfield, RI, location made up roughly 15% of the NMC revenue on an annual basis. The team wanted to be ready to take on more work, however “we literally had machines scattered all over the production floor,” said Plant Manager Brandon Castaneda.

Internal leads and outside facilitators had run several small kaizens for the company, so they started creating spaghetti diagrams of the Tag Area. The complex nature of Tags had them creating more than a dozen different diagrams!

SOLUTION

National Marker hired Polaris MEP to conduct a kaizen that ultimately would consolidate the Tag work areas. Kaizen is a term that refers to activities which continuously improve a business. In this case, the kaizen training event nearly came to a full-stop before it truly started for two reasons.

First, the complexity of Tag production. Project Manager Nathan Bonds quickly simplified the challenge by identifying the highest-volume workflow, which covered about 80% of Tag-related processes. “He jumped in and guided us down the right path,” said Andrew Ellison, Vice President of Operations, North America. “We can’t attack the entire thing so let’s focus in on that volume.”

Second, employee push-back. “We had associates who’d been doing things for a long time in a certain way and they felt that because they’d been working like that for so long, it must be the best way,” said Castaneda. Bonds approached the facilitation with Perseverance and Respect for People. Employees who had been against the effort “ended up being the biggest advocates of change afterwards.”



\$25,000 unnecessary investments avoided



Increased throughput in Tag area by **25%**



5 jobs retained; **3 skilled workers** re-assigned within the facility



Sales increased **7%**



8% reduction in direct costs

Read the full success story at: <https://bit.ly/2Yk109S>