

LEAN INVENTORY TRAINING HELPS GLASSWORKS STUDIO REDUCE MESS AND STRESS, INCREASE SUCCESS

COMPANY PROFILE

In 2004, artist Tracy Glover found that she was so busy with her “on the side” glassworks design and production, she quit her day job and founded her own studio. Pawtucket-based Tracy Glover Studio has since grown in size – 8 employees and a 5,000 square foot space – and reputation. It’s now a favorite source for exquisite, hand-blown, customizable decorative lighting fixtures.



Business and residential clients across the world appreciate the ability to personalize the stunning fixtures completely – choosing options for the color of the glass, finish of the metal, shape and more. The key to the Studio’s success has been offering customizability while at the same time using parts in scale for cost-effective fabrication.

SITUATION

By 2021 the business was growing fast – almost 75% quarter-over-quarter – but the team was inefficient. “I felt like the walls were closing in. There was clutter everywhere.” The designer didn’t feel like she could fix it on her own. “I knew there was a lot I didn’t know. We all had ideas [on how to improve efficiency] but had to have an outside person facilitate it, help us pick the right approach and implement it.”

Glover was enrolled in the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses – Rhode Island program. After hearing several glowing testimonials about Polaris MEP from current and past participants, she reached out to the state’s MEP Center.

SOLUTION

The first project the team undertook was visual identification of inventory, coupled with Lean principles that helped all employees learn how to maximize flow of value-added processes.

“We would pick a room and work on it. We pulled everything out of the metal shop and then put in only what was needed,” recalled Glover. “The lead who worked in that area was so happy! When everyone saw how happy he was, they were inspired.” Glover likes to run her businesses in a manner which aligns with LEAN Manufacturing principles of empowerment.

“Once you’ve gotten good at my way, if you think you can improve it, I’m open to your ideas. It’s all about celebrating when someone comes up with an innovation – whether it’s packing or a technique or whatever it is. The more you recognize someone for their innovations, the more they take on challenges and feel pride in figuring things out on their own.” After the “Learn-Do” LEAN training, the metal shop lead took greater ownership of that area. He organizes and re-organizes on his own, constantly refining his space and improving his workflow according to the principles, said Glover.

Polaris MEP Project Manager Ted Kennedy then built on that momentum, coaching Glover’s staff as they tackled the glass blowing and packaging



TRACY GLOVER

OBJECTS AND LIGHTING

IMPACTS



New sales of \$250,000;
retained sales of \$275,000



2 new jobs; 2 employee
positions retained



Investments of \$47,500 in
plant, equipment and
information systems



Investment of \$30,000 in new
products and processes



Cost savings of \$257,000 in
both direct savings and by
avoiding unnecessary
investments



“It’s paid off. Customers are happier, our lead times went down, there are fewer mistakes. Everything improved for everybody, after we worked with Polaris MEP [on inventory and process flow].”

Tracy Glover
President & CEO



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