WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE
BY PETER CROWELL

It has been quite a year already, as we work to improve our business and operations. Many of you have heard me speak about LEAN. What does LEAN MANAGEMENT mean to you? For me, it simply means making what we do easier, faster, lower cost and better. LEAN started with Toyota in Japan in the early 1950’s. The family that owned Toyota studied Ford methods and agreed that a mass-production system wouldn’t work in Japan! So from the beginning LEAN has a cultural dimension that is critically important to its success. Lean has tools and a language, and it requires a culture of inclusive involvement in decision making with lots of accountability, with a focus on continuous improvement of systems and processes.

LEAN is key to our future competitiveness, so our sites have begun a LEAN Journey. Many of you have seen the LEAN Visual Management white boards proliferating throughout the business. These boards and the morning WAR (Walk Around Review) is now operational in 4 of our 5 sites. Is it helpful? Stay tuned and get involved!

In Massachusetts, we have secured a state funded grant to assist us with LEAN training and development. Classes have started and include topics like LEAN 101, 5S, Value Stream Mapping, Lean Office, Kaizen, Toyotakata, and so on. Next we are working to secure similar training opportunities in NY, PA, and OH.

So if you hear someone ask you what good looks like, chime in! Why? Anything that is hard work today can be made easier with a LEAN approach, by replacing the Hard Work with new Standard Work. This is what we want Universal Plastics to be great at doing.

All things are possible. Welcome to the journey.

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UNIVERSAL PLASTICS AT A GLANCE

**THERMOFORMING**

- YTD Tooling RFQs: 499
- YTD Tooling Awarded: 85

**Biggest Wins:**
- Transportation - Covers for airport security

**INJECTION MOLDING**

- YTD Tooling RFQs: 640
- YTD Tooling Awarded: 155

**Biggest Wins:**
- Medical - Console Assembly
- Medical - Synthesizer Assembly

**BLOW MOLDING**

- YTD Tooling RFQs: 33
- YTD Tooling Awarded: 7

**Biggest Wins:**
- Fluid Containers: Carboys
- Recycling: Bin Liners
**STANDARD WORK AT ALL FIVE SUPERSTAR SITES**

**Holyoke:** Lean, the Holyoke Journey...Chapter 1 begins with...That's not LEAN...wait what is Lean?...yeah that's definitely not lean. Chapter 2 we begin to figure this LEAN thing out. We begin to ask our questions out loud. We begin to implement visual management, first in Production, then throughout the facility. We begin to look inwards as much as outwards for opportunity, and we start to identify hard work. At the core of Lean is the opportunity to improve. Something, anything, everything is on the table using the Lean principles. Chapter 10...... We see self-directed groups, visual management that identifies opportunities to improve, direct link to the Customer needs, open dialogue to reduce hard work. We have to open our tool boxes to be successful, and we have to give everyone a toolbox, and the opportunity to use it. Our success cannot happen without a culture that supports change. - Mike Denette

**Sutton:** From the Sutton factory, the Lean Journey is in the beginning stages. The work to build the Visual Management systems (WAR boards) has been in place and moving in the right direction. The daily activity of the huddle boards is starting to create dialogue, and that dialogue will begin to highlight “Hard work” and that will point to the process that needs some attention. At the end of the WAR, I may ask did anyone learn anything today. Well? - Mike Denette

**Middlefield & Latrobe:** For the Latrobe PA and Middlefield OH facilities we're at the very early stages of beginning our Lean Journey. Middlefield has instituted a Walk Around Review that takes place every morning and includes the entire Management Team. These WAR’s support the Lean focus by using simple visual management as a means to communicate effectively within the entire facility. In an effort to move to the next step, we have established connections, over the past couple of weeks, at a local level that will help provide resources to greatly support our journey. Over the upcoming weeks we will be performing Lean Assessments that will provide an objective view of the current level of internal processes that are in place along with a view into the commitment and engagement of our people. This is an exciting time and a key starting point to the future success of our Lean journey within Universal Plastics. - Todd Pierce

**Albany:** Universal Albany is excited to have “LEAN” as a foundation for conducting business. We have discussed the definition of LEAN as “Easier, Better, Faster, and Cheaper”. As we grow into LEAN, we will have a Continuous Improvement Culture, 5S, and Waste reduction. Earlier this year, we received a 2019 SUNY Workforce Training Development Grant where we had a group of Team Leaders and Supervisors attend an eight-week training program for “Leadership Team Building”. The program focused on leadership, communication, and the opportunity for positive change. There are future plans for additional classes and grants to be implemented at Albany. We have a great staff here, and look forward to the LEAN transformation. - Rich Megyesi

**Thermoform Engineering:** A key element of the LEAN journey is communication. Learning how the WAR has enabled communications from department to department we have taken the same approach in Engineering by:

- Establishing an Engineering/Purchasing WAR 2 times per week in Holyoke
- Weekly project reviews between Engineers in Holyoke, Sutton, and Albany
- Developing Tooling board for the shop

Some key results from this collaboration are:

- Over $500,000 Reduction of raw material inventory through substitutions & consolidation of similar parts
- Over 100 BOM corrections based on approved recommendations from the shop floor
- Commissioned 42 new tools this year with 43 more in process
- Improved fixturing and tool modifications to support scrap reduction and improved productivity

Clearly, communications are a small but powerful component of our LEAN journey. As we move forward we expect great opportunities in projects on the shop floors to make our processes and products more efficient, cost-effective and improve quality. The results demonstrated above are just the beginning!

**THIS EDITION’S PHOTO BY MIKE DENETTE**

**Annual Pumpkin carving with the kids. On Halloween, we light them and that’s where we put the candy for trick or treaters.**

**CHARLOTTE, NC TRADE SHOW**

Universal Plastics will be represented at a Design-2-Part Trade show in Charlotte, NC November 13-14, 2019. During the show, all facilities and processes will be highlighted with the intention of finding high-quality leads to boost sales.