Oster Alloys

Rhode Island Manufacturing Extension Services

Oster's Improvement Keep Company Moving Forward

Client Profile:
Oster-Pewter, located in Providence, Rhode Island, is a supplier of lead-free, low-melting-point rolled sheet pewter. Composed of tin, antimony and copper, it is cold-workable to a flat, satin or bright finish and takes metal oxidation, or develops a natural patina. Tarnish resistant, it cleans up with soap and water. It is available in circles, discs, sheet, strip and coil that can be spun, cast, hammered, drawn, embossed, formed and rolled. Used by manufacturers and artisans, the finished products include giftware, hollowware, jewelry, and industrial applications such as ceiling tiles and countertops.

Situation:
John Baldwin, President of Oster-Pewter, contacted Rhode Island Manufacacturing Extension Services (RIMES), a NIST MEP network affiliate, to help them evaluate, design and implement changes to increase productivity, improve product flow and review the design and layout of their new facility.

Solution:
After an initial assessment by RIMES project manager, Carl Dwinnells, Mr. Baldwin hired RIMES to provide a CAD drawing of the current layout. Upon completion of the current layout, Mr. Dwinnells developed an improved and integrated layout with action plans for implementation. Mr. Dwinnells also implemented cellular manufacturing and assisted in the procurement and installation of air transport vacuum and conveyor systems. New material handling techniques, upgraded machinery, better safety protocols, better ergonomics and potentially new packaging improved Oster-Pewter's competitiveness and allowed for sustained growth in the future. New work cells were created to allow for faster processing of the pewter through the beginning operations of the process. Quality improvements were also taken into consideration by the automation of a scrap removal system using an air transport vacuum system. Upon installation, elimination of contamination of the pewter from the scrap process and labor in handling of the scrap was reduced by 40 percent.

Results:
* Implemented new layout and cellular manufacturing.
* Improved competitiveness due to improved material handling, safety protocols, and packaging.
* Developed new work cells to allow faster processing of the pewter.
* Installed air transport vacuum system.
* Eliminated contamination of the pewter from the scrap process.
* Reduced labor in handling of the scrap by 40 percent.
* Anticipated reduction in throughput time by 40 percent and space required by 50 percent over next two years.

Testimonial:
"Over the next few years, the implementation of these changes will reduce throughput time by almost 40 percent and the space required by 50 percent. This project has helped us keep 10 manufacturing jobs in Rhode Island."

John Baldwin, President