



THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY FOR THE CITY

Camtech Nutrition Ltd
Case Study on Lean Thinking
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Interview with Martin Blampied, GM

ICE Creates Culture Change and Improved Business Efficiencies

Camtech Nutrition has just started down the 'Lean Manufacturing Journey,' but already it has seen huge benefits from implementing the principles.

General Manager, Martin Blampied, says: "Lean is like common sense put together in a structured way. Implementing Lean Thinking shortens the value add process in your business and helps you get your product out the door more efficiently."

Established in the early 1980s, Camtech's Dunstan Horse Feed brand is a New Zealand icon within the New Zealand equine nutrition market. The Company is 100% New Zealand owned and operated and has set high values and standards in the daily operation of its business. The company markets its Dunstan Horse Feeds throughout New Zealand.

Camtech operates two manufacturing plants in the Waikato - one in Te Rapa and the other in Tamahere.

In 1997 the company relocated its operations from Auckland to the Waikato and their extremely loyal, mostly Tongan, workforce moved with them. The company now has 20 full-time staff.

And, it's the change in its staff that Martin says has been the biggest benefit of implementing Lean Thinking in his business.

"Our staff meetings have changed significantly and we get more ideas from our people about things we can do to improve the business. Our staff now has a better understanding of the business's value chain and they feel listened to. They are telling us where the blocks are in the production process and people are working together to find and implement solutions.

"One example of how we've worked with staff to implement Lean, is during a staff meeting we recently asked them: *over the next week, bring up something that causes you to wait unnecessarily during your workday.* From that one exercise we received a whole cluster of ideas and each has gone up on our white board and it won't come down until we've solved it," explains Martin.

Martin also says Lean Thinking has been an impetus for communicating better with staff. The company has posted signs around the warehouse that remind staff about Camtech's values, purpose and goals.

"By far, the top benefit we've got out of implementing Lean Thinking at Camtech has been the motivation it has given our staff. They are so much more enthusiastic about their jobs because they are totally involved in making it a better business. They are engaged and they know we respect their ideas," says Martin.

Martin says there are costs involved in reducing inefficiencies and making changes in the business, but the return is so much greater. Profits will eventually see the positive effects of reducing blocks in the value chain and making Camtech a more efficient operation.



One example of how Camtech has implemented Lean Thinking to create efficiencies in its business is the changes it has made in its order picking process. The order picking process has been streamlined to decrease forklift movements, and make it more sequential and logical. As a result, forklift gas usage has gone down significantly.

Opportunity Hamilton's Lean Thinking trainer, Richard Braithwaite, has worked with Camtech one-on-one, following their training. He says, "Camtech is a good, forward-thinking company with solid business practices and an excellent product. The piece that was missing in its business was getting staff even more involved in taking the company forward.

"Through Lean Thinking, Martin and his team have learned how to involve staff to a greater degree in identifying and solving problems that make the business better. There has been a colossal change very quickly by simply letting staff put forward ideas for improvement.

"The company is also taking health and safety more seriously – they've improved signage, decreased work-in-progress and decreased forklift movements. There's less interaction between people and machinery, which is a good move for health and safety."

Camtech has taken to Lean so well, it has decided to brand its internal Lean Manufacturing programme calling it ICE, which stands for 'Improving Camtech's Efficiency.' Martin says giving the principles a name has helped staff understand the overall goals, get on board with making a difference and become a part of the implementation.

"We've only just got started with implementing Lean Thinking at Camtech, and we look forward to seeing how much impact it will make over the long term. Once you start, you just can't stop – it's like a monster and you have to keep feeding the monster by finding and solving inefficiencies in the business.

"It's so exciting when your people can make changes and see the positive results quickly. Everyone at Camtech is excited about the journey we are on and working together to be the best we can be," says Martin.

Camtech has already implemented Lean principles in its office/administration processes. It has identified a raft of opportunities for increasing efficiencies in this area of its operations.

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