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Candy Company is Sweet and Lean

By Jennifer Sinsabaugh, Operations Director, New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership

When Clovis-based Leslie Candy Company was purchased by Greg Southard in 2002, the 50-year-old company was using trusted manufacturing processes and recipes to create peanut patties, brittles and haystacks for distribution to supermarkets, convenience stores and specialty boutiques throughout the United States. Southard invited New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership into the organization to review how things were flowing on the manufacturing floor.

Today, Southard still uses the company's savory recipes and traditional cooking methods, but he now runs a lean shop with streamlined operations. "New Mexico MEP came in, watched our processes and provided feedback and solutions," said Southard. "Based on their recommendation, we implemented an incentive program for our frontline employees, which resulted in a production increase of 25 percent, while lowering overall operating costs. New Mexico MEP helped us to look at our processes in a new way," he said.

New Mexico MEP is a non-profit organization that helps businesses increase profitability. Serving businesses throughout the state from its offices in Albuquerque, Roswell, Farmington and Las Cruces, New Mexico MEP brings together experts in government, not-for-profit organizations and industry to offer resources that help companies become more competitive.

Based on the premise that a lean operation is a profitable operation, New Mexico MEP helps key staff understand the principles of lean manufacturing. It offers workshops, on-site trainings and systems analyses.

Southard's Leslie Candy Company benefited from applying Value Stream Mapping to its manufacturing operation. VSM creates a visual map of existing operations – the route that raw materials take to become a finished product – and compares it to a map of how things could be done more efficiently. It helps participants analyze a business's manufacturing system to identify redundancy and waste, and determines the tools needed to implement improvements. Starting with the way a company acquires its raw materials, VSM seeks to shorten the time it takes products to get to consumers.

Value Stream Mapping is also used in administrative settings to eliminate unnecessary paperwork and processes. The same principles, when applied to a front office or bookkeeping department, can put the focus back on the customer by incorporating lean concepts.

Besides efficiency trainings, New Mexico MEP offers classes that teach supervisors how to relate to employees, including how to motivate, resolve conflicts, reduce accidents, decrease equipment damage and increase product quality and quantity.

Businesses can also utilize the Partnership for Success program, a free Internet-based library and email subscription service that provides technical background and business information.

Businesses may be eligible for funding from the New Mexico Small Business Assistance Programs of Sandia and Los Alamos National Laboratories. For more information or to verify eligibility, call 505-262-0921 or visit www.newmexicomep.org.

Finance New Mexico is an initiative of the New Mexico Small Business Investment Corporation (NMSBIC) and its partners to assist individuals and businesses in obtaining skills and funding-resources for their business or idea. To learn more, go to www.FinanceNewMexico.org.

