



La Quercia – Getting Lean on a Tight Schedule and in Spanish!

Background:

La Quercia, a Norwalk company that produces high quality artisan cured meats including salami, prosciutto, pancetta, coppa, speck, lomo, guanciale, and lardo, is one of those great Iowa hidden treasures. La Quercia prides itself on using only the best ingredients, produced responsibly, and crafting them by hand into something that expresses their appreciation for the beauty and bounty of Iowa.

Challenge:

To meet growing customer demand for its artisan meats, La Quercia needed to increase productivity. A number of the growing company's organizational systems and processes were simply not keeping up with its rapid production expansions.

Solution:

Thanks to a training grant, administered through DMACC Business Resources (DBR), La Quercia implemented a number of workplacelean programs to improve facility environments, streamline troublesome processes and to begin instilling a day-to-day lean culture among employees. DMACC customized its regular program to fit La Quercia's tight schedule.

La Quercia got its feet wet with a 5S (Sort, Shine, Set, Standardize and Sustain) training for its office staff then, given the success of "sorting" out the office, La Quercia brought the DMACC workplacelean team in again to apply 5S to its plant shipping and receiving area. To accommodate La Quercia's schedule, DMACC consultants conducted the training on a Saturday and, as the majority of employees were Spanish-speakers, DMACC also brought along a translator to ensure effective communication.

Finally, in order to set the stage for a more company-wide lean culture, DMACC conducted a hands-on training to help staff understand workflow concepts which has had a number of ripple effects in different areas of the company.

Results:

The 5S training for the office and shipping/receiving locations has resulted in more efficient work environments.

- One example of improvements noted is prior to the 5S training, all of the company's office supplies were in several different places. Thanks to 5S, all of the supply locations are consolidated and everything is neatly labeled. Now they know exactly what they have and everything is easily accessible.
- La Quercia management has been able to refer back to the training and apply the lean process improvement process to improve productivity in a number of areas.

“DBR's workplacelean program has helped LaQuercia increase efficiency in a number of areas, from production to gains in inventory control. DBR was able to meet our unique bilingual and scheduling requirements and as a result of their lean training, we have already seen increases in productivity. Our employees have enjoyed being an integral part of the process.”

- Emily Tripp, La Quercia Controller