

Where passion and people equal excellence



innovation Insights

BY ERICA SCHROEDER

Passion, leadership and innovation are the core values that formed Port Coquitlam, BC-based ASI Plastics; 37 years later those values continue to inspire the thriving manufacturer.

"It is driven from the top down. That makes the difference," said Dan Sabourin, president and co-founder of ASI.

But it was the Innovation Insights — a best practices program delivered through a partnership between CME and the National Research Council — Industrial Research Assistance Program — that inspired ASI to embark on its LEAN journey.

Sabourin, together with his team attended many Innovation Insights visits that showcased best practices implemented in larger companies. The visits left the ASI team with the sense that they needed to acquire LEAN training if they wanted to put any of the best practices they experienced into action.

ASI applied for and was accepted into a program CME BC was offering, Pull Ahead BC. The program — that was funded by the BC Ministry of Small Business — provided continuous improvement training for BC's small manufacturers.

"We put all 39 employees through LEAN 101, trained two employees in 5S, hosted as part of the Pull Ahead consortium a shop floor leadership session and organized a one-week LEAN team leadership session that was held here," said Sabourin.

The organization created three internal groups — a continuous improvement

tapped rehearsal, they rehearsed again two days prior to the session.

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team, 5S team and value stream mapping team — and started bringing each group together for weekly meetings.

To date ASI has realized significant results, it has reduced defects from eight out of 100 to one out of 300, reduced its total manufacturing time by 25 per cent and shrunk its plant floor by 50 per cent.

When ASI was approached by the Innovation Insights to host a visit, about how the company started their LEAN journey and what their organization accomplished, ASI accepted the invitation.

"I wanted our presentation to be different than the ones I attended," said Sabourin. ASI prepared for the Innovation Insights visit by gathering its "ship's counselor" — an employee everyone has turned to since 1979 — to speak about the company's culture and how much the organization changed in one year compared to any other time during her employment. ASI also pulled in its production manager to act as the moderator of the Innovation Insights presentation and two members of each of the 5S, value stream mapping and continuous improvement groups. As their coach, Sabourin met with the group two weeks prior to the date of their event to discuss their presentation. One week prior the group participated in a video

The presentation was a huge success; the presenters spoke with passion and confidence to the 16 industry participants in attendance.

Following the event, Sabourin pulled the group of presenters together to debrief. "The experience gave them a whole new sense of pride and passion — it's really contagious," Sabourin stated with pride.

In February, ASI hosted an Innovation Insights LEARNING Session in its 1,400 square foot training area.

Although, the ASI team may not believe they are world class yet — seeing it as a continuous journey — they have created a world-class culture.

"My management style, expectations and willingness to get out of the way has changed," Sabourin shared. "I'm committed to the process." **2020**

ASI Plastics provides custom fabrication and thermoforming in its 21,000 square foot facility for clients throughout North America.

