

CONVAID: Wheeling Their Way to Growth



Empowering caregivers of special needs children is an important task, and that's just what Convaid does on a daily basis. Located in Torrance, California, Convaid has been a manufacturer of folding wheelchair structures since 1976. The company's goal is to provide the best combination of corrective positioning, comfort, durability and safety in wheelchairs for physically challenged children.



Sensitivity to the broad needs of the physically challenged and their caregivers is a top priority for the company. That's why the organization's five basic wheelchair structures come in a variety of sizes and models and the customer has a choice of more than a hundred custom chairs that come in different colors. Convaid's

patented chairs are easily carried up stairs and can be transported on buses, trains and planes, providing more mobility for their customers.

A great organization such as Convaid should always be growing, and from 2010 to 2012 the company experienced an increase in sales. While they were excited to grow, the organization was finding it more difficult to accommodate the increase in orders.

"We were finding it challenging to keep up with production levels while keeping our processes efficient," says Ed Packard, Director of Operations for Convaid. Packard says that the organization was seeing higher lead-times and "works in progress" which was impacting their relationships with customers. "We needed to find a way to keep up with production while still setting the foundation for growth."



Convaid turned to California Manufacturing Technology Consulting® (CMTC) for assistance. After initial consulting, CMTC recommended that Convaid participate in a structured training program for both managers and employees to develop their skills and implement improvement changes right away. "Our staff is important to us, so it was essential that our employees were a part of the change process," says Packard.

In February of 2012, CMTc began numerous projects with Convoid. This included six Lean 101 Workshops, Current and Future State Value Stream Maps and two Rapid Improvement (Kaizen) events. Consultants worked with team members to identify specific opportunities for improvement. Plans were created to pinpoint and prioritize action items and the team learned how to apply the improvements in a timely manner.



“It was great how the workshops reinforced our company’s mission and stressed how our staff plays an important role in achieving our goals,” says Packard.

CMTc’s projects ended with Convoid in April of 2012. As a result of the projects, the organization was able to significantly improve their operations. Their “works in progress” experienced a decline of 12% and their lead-times were reduced to 35%.

Convoid was also able to realize \$120,000 cost savings in labor, materials, energy and overhead which allowed the organization to invest in growth areas such as better equipment, software improvements and new product developments. These initiatives allowed Convoid to earn \$250,000 in new sales and the increase in demand resulted in the hiring of 5 new employees.

“Our experience with CMTc was a valuable and rewarding one. Their cooperation and flexibility allowed us to achieve our goals and objectives without disrupting our daily requirements. I look forward to continued growth with CMTc’s assistance.”

*-Ed Packard
Director of Operations*

FEATURED CUSTOMER

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