



COMPANY PROFILE

Gar-Kenyon Technologies, 2009 Manufacturer of the Year, has over 50 years of experience designing and manufacturing precision engineered hydraulic and pneumatic actuators, restrictors, shuttle valves, check valves, flow fuses, breaking devices and other components for the commercial and military aviation industries.

The family owned business is a long-term supplier to companies including Cessna, Bombardier/Learjet, Lockheed-Martin, Gulfstream, and Bell Helicopter. Their parts can be found in every kind of airplane made today.

It wasn't always as successful as it has become today. Started in 1954 as Gar-Precision Products, it was later sold to the New Haven Manufacturing Company and then fell into bankruptcy in the 1990's. In 2003 Steve Fournier, President and CEO, bought the company and moved it to Naugatuck, Connecticut. Steve, a former partner in a major accounting firm, knew little about manufacturing when he bought the company, but he knew a lot about how to turn a company around.

Soon after he acquired Gar-Kenyon, Steve purchased a 44,000 square foot facility and began transforming the company into a Lean, customer-focused business. He recruited talented engineering and manufacturing personnel and made investments in technology and equipment.

From the start, Steve made a serious commitment to continuous improvement. One of his earliest moves was to

join the Supplier Excellence Alliance (SEA), a nationwide group of aerospace and defense suppliers who are dedicated to distinguishing themselves by accelerating their improvement effort. Gar-Kenyon is one of nine SEA companies based in Connecticut. In addition to supporting Steve's commitment to excellence, SEA has given Gar-Kenyon, a small manufacturer with twenty-five (25) employees, visibility with the larger companies.

Gar-Kenyon Technologies Naugatuck, Connecticut 25 employees

CONNSTEP Lean Solutions

- 30% improvement in on-time delivery;
- 99% increase in average part velocity;
- 30% improvement in machine up-time; and
- \$200,000 savings in capital improvement.

SITUATION

By 2007 Gar-Kenyon was beginning to grow, but was also experiencing growing pains. The biggest problem was on-time customer delivery. It was only 50% because the CNC shop was not as productive as it needed to be and because the company's suppliers were not performing well. The average part velocity was too low and overtime hours were high.

Steve's first experience with CONNSTEP, a Connecticut certified SEA Consultant, was when he brought them in to get the company AS9100 Certified.

CONNSTEP's Charles Weiss helped Gar-Kenyon achieve this certification so when Steve needed help with Strategic Planning and Lean deployment, he turned once again to CONNSTEP. Charles Weiss referred Steve to Ray Snyder who then sent in CONNSTEP's John McCarroll.

SOLUTION

CONNSTEP's John McCarroll helped Gar-Kenyon accomplish an enterprise-wide Lean transformation. John began with

an intensive three day strategic planning session with senior management. Then with the vision of operational excellence in place, John continued working with the company to build Lean into the business strategy and to identify the Lean tools that fit.

The outcome of the strategic planning workshop was a set of short, medium and long term strategies for continuous improvement. Management conducted customer feedback surveys and set the schedule of continuous improvement activities.

Gar-Kenyon's goal for 2008 was to double the output of the machine shop without adding new employees. CONNSTEP worked with the company to identify and implement the tools that would help them attain this goal. They performed Kaizen and focused their efforts on machine shop productivity, on-time delivery, average part velocity, and improving their supplier contracts.

RESULTS

The upshot of Gar-Kenyon's enterprise wide transformation from 2007-2008 were the following:

- On-time delivery improved by 30% and continues to improve;
- Average part velocity increased by 99%;
- Savings on set-up time by moving the machine to the lathe area;
- Improved machine up-time 30% by instituting a scheduling board with daily board meetings to keep priorities focused;
- Reduced purchasing on outside machine parts by \$200,000; and
- Reduced overtime

Gar-Kenyon was a finalist in the 2009 SEA Awards for "Most Improved Using SEA Metrics," with criteria including inventory turns, revenue per employee, on-time delivery and defects per million opportunities.

Sales increased in 2009 over 2008 and bookings are up substantially in 2010. Since Steve revitalized the company, Gar-Kenyon's revenues have increased by almost 60%.

CONNSTEP has been working with Gar-Kenyon for about three years and continues to work with the company, as Steve invites CONNSTEP back each year to assist with a tune-up to their strategic plan.

"CONNSTEP is a great resource to Connecticut based manufacturers. It has a proven track record of making a difference in companies like Gar-Kenyon and I would highly recommend them – particularly key consultants John McCarroll and Matin Karbassioon."

Steve Fournier
President & CEO
Gar-Kenyon Technologies

NEXT STEPS

In addition to implementing continuous improvement strategies, the company will focus next on workforce development including standardized work and instructions. The company's goal is to develop ten new products each year and to continue growing.

