

# FOCUS

Newsletter of the Centers for Applied Competitive Technologies

Focusing on strategic partnerships and economic development programs



CACT

Centers for Applied Competitive Technologies  
California Community Colleges

## Sometimes it pays to take people off the factory floor

Aquafine Corporation reaps tangible benefits from its Lean Manufacturing training partnership with College of the Canyons and the Continuous Improvement Consultancy

Executives at small to mid-size companies are understandably hesitant to pull key people from their duties to undergo LEAN training. But when they commit to the program, the results can be so dramatic that those same executives often wonder why they didn't do it sooner.

Such was the case with Aquafine Corporation, a leading manufacturer of ultraviolet water treatment equipment based in Valencia, serving major companies in a variety of industries, including semiconductor, bio-pharmaceutical, food and beverage, and power generation.

Faced with ever-increasing competition in the marketplace, Aquafine needed to find a way to produce more units in less time – without a drop in quality. The answer: LEAN, a philosophy that can streamline a company's efficiency and productivity – and a philosophy now embraced by Aquafine.

Understanding that improving business processes and creating a culture that supported communication and teamwork were requirements for success, the Aquafine management team embarked on a partnership with College of the Canyons and Continuous Improvement Consultancy for LEAN training.

Aquafine committed 20 of its factory, sales,

technical, and administrative employees to LEAN training. Even though the training consumed 60 hours of production time, the results more than made up for the time spent in the classroom—they sparked a radical transformation within the company.

The training was divided into two segments. The first segment took 20 hours and was conducted over a five-week period. It focused on teamwork skills such as communication, team building, and establishing trust.

The second segment followed—an intensive 40-hour week of LEAN training in which two teams completed separate projects. The training took them out of the classroom, applying what they learned

on the factory floor. Participants also received training in Kaizen, a quick-hitting, practical method of improving factory and administrative processes.

The first project involved a factory team trained in a technique called Single Minute Exchange of Dies (SMED), which is a method of reducing setup or changeover times of complex machinery. The team was challenged to reduce the setup time of a large machine tool.

By the end of the week, the team reduced the setup time from 35 to 13 minutes. In addition to



Our FOCUS is partnerships that enhance workforce training and economic development

[www.cact.org](http://www.cact.org)

making the task easier and safer for the shop personnel, this improvement will help Aquafine become more flexible and productive.

The second project team addressed administrative and process-flow issues. Its task was to complete an exercise called Value Stream Mapping, a technique that analyzes a company's product flow - from supplier to delivery of a finished product to an end customer.

Their analysis allowed Aquafine to pinpoint its bottlenecks and design a new flow to radically improve delivery times, reduce inventories, and increase cash flow.

At the conclusion of the five-day segment, the LEAN Team graduates shared their results during a formal presentation to company executives, who were impressed with the team's new skills

and sense of teamwork. Aquafine is now aggressively applying its newly acquired skills to a wide variety of production and administrative areas within the company.



The College of the Canyons' Center for Applied Competitive Technologies (CACT), under which the LEAN training was organized, is an example of one of 15 technology-training centers located at California community colleges and dedicated to help California

manufacturers compete successfully in the global marketplace. The CACTs provide manufacturers with a single point access to advanced technology training and expert technical assistance. The CACTs offer on-site assessments to any of California's 57,000 manufacturers. For more information, call 877-607-2228.

## CACTs

### Centers for Applied Competitive Technologies

#### CACT Purpose:

The purpose of the Centers for Applied Competitive Technologies is to support the mission of the California Community College's Economic and Workforce Development Program by assisting California manufacturers to remain competitive in changing markets and a global economy.

For more information:  
visit our Web site at:  
[www.cact.org](http://www.cact.org)

PR Contact:  
**Peter Bellas**  
(661) 259-3874

e-mail:  
[peter.bellas@canyons.edu](mailto:peter.bellas@canyons.edu)



#### CACT Funding:

State funding for CACT provided by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Economic and Workforce Development program. Additional funding assistance provided by local colleges, NIST/MEC, and industry partners.