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(or Their) Business?

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ISSUE

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Sarah Sudar, Copywriter, Printing Industries of America

When was the last time you ate at McDonald's?

Chances are you came across a Vox Printing product while you were there.

The Oklahoma City printer specializes in quick service restaurant products, like trayliners and placemats.

The company was started in January 1971 by Dennis and LaVerna Reid first as a general commercial business serving small businesses and churches in Oklahoma City. In the third month of operation, McDonald's approached the company to start printing menu tickets (when orders were still taken by hand) for regional restaurants in the area, which eventually spread to printing for McDonald's across the country.

"We were able to get in there because McDonald's wasn't able to get menu tickets printed fast enough from their national supplier and my parents said they could do it," says David Reid, current president of Vox Printing. "They worked nights and weekends on the small equipment to get it done, which is what our company philosophy has always been:

to always find a way to meet customer deadlines and help them out in any way that we can."

As business with McDonald's grew to include coupons, flyers, giveaways, and short-run pieces, Vox Printing decided in the 1990s to focus on this quick service food niche market and phased out their commercial printing business. The current printing options range from clam shells, French fry cartons and wraps, to deli boxes, drive-thru trays, and carry-out containers, servicing a variety of fast food restaurants. Staying within the food industry, Vox Printing also works with grocers and food brands to print produce trays and packaging cartons. Beyond printing, Vox Printing has an in-house creative team that works directly with McDonald's to create new products that are rolled out across the country.

In addition to its products, Vox Printing prides itself in its employees and the workplace culture. Having won the Best Workplace in the Americas Award (BWA) by PIA for the past 11 years and being one of the best places to work in Oklahoma by okc.BIZ for 10 years, Vox Printing has made it a mission to build a trusting and transparent relationship

with their employees, which has helped tremendously when instituting continuous improvement methods.

“We have built a relationship of trust so that when we introduce new CI Initiatives and ask employees to do it, they trust that we are doing something for their benefit and the benefit of the company,” says Robert Reid, vice president of operations.

He adds that this trusting relationship with employees empowers them to ask questions and to ask for changes when they see fit and that there has been little pushback from employees when continuous improvements have been implemented because they are excited to do anything that betters the company.

Continuous improvement has been an important part of Vox’s business strategy since the beginning and has been instilled into their family values.

“Our parents were brought up on farms, doing things efficiently. They transferred that work ethic to us, so we are always looking for ways to do things better and get things done faster,” says David Reid.



In the early 1990s, the company sent management to various seminars held by their local PIA affiliate where they learned how to create a culture of continuous improvement. It wasn’t until 2008 that they made the changes necessary to sustain their improvements. At this time they made continuous improvement a major focus, promoting an internal employee to be a Lean coordinator. His first responsibility was to attend PIA’s Continuous Improvement Conference. Vox Printing first started with 5S, which proved to be very successful in all of their presses and production



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 CANON SEE IMPOSSIBLE

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areas, and then focused on quick change procedures for their web presses and has maintained these improvements for the past 10 years. Next came a new inventory management system and putting into place standard work training.

In 2010, Vox Printing purchased a packaging company in Texas and lost sight of continuous improvement for a couple of years, but refocused in 2014. Instead of having just the tools and processes in place, they included their people into the process. Each morning, the management team would take a tour of each of the presses and talk to employees about the problems that were preventing them from running the press to its fullest potential. This process is still implemented, though now in a digital format with software and sensors on all presses.

In mid-January, Vox Printing adopted Paul Acre's two-second Lean style of continuous improvement, giving employees time each day to fix things that bug them and look for waste. Training for the more than 60 employees has been developed, including a book club-type format that Robert is leading the charge on. In each of the company's four shifts, he has set aside time to meet with employees about this new concept each week.

“Benefits of this style of improvement has a whole lot to do with increasing employee engagement; it will make the job easier and less frustrating and give them an opportunity to express creativity, while reducing waste and increasing profit margin,” says Robert Reid.

David Reid adds that training employees on Lean also helps take the burden off of management to always be looking for ways to improve things. Employees can now do it and they know better than anyone else what could be improved in their areas.

The Reids hope that Vox Printing will continuously be one of the best workplaces. They have created a profit sharing plan with 10 percent of the profit going back to employees, giving them even more stake in making Vox a better place to be. And, Robert will continue to make each Vox Printing employee a homemade birthday cake of his or her choice.

LEARN MORE...

At voxprioting.com and hear more about Vox Printing's continuous improvements during Robert's talk, "Vox's CI Awakening," at this year's Continuous Improvement conference.