



Office Locations: Cape Girardeau, Columbia, Kansas City, Kirksville, Park Hills, Rolla, Springfield, St. Louis, St. Charles, West Plains

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**THE
MANUFACTURING
EXTENSION
PARTNERSHIP
IN MISSOURI**

Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is a nationwide system of services and support for smaller manufacturers to become more globally competitive. At the heart of the system is a network of affiliated, locally-based manufacturing extension centers. Each center, like Missouri Enterprise, is a partnership, typically involving federal, state, and local governments; industry; educational institutions; and other sources of expertise, information and funding support.

COMPANY CLIPS

Argo Products Achieves ISO 9002 Registration

Argo Products is a general fabricating company in the heart of St. Louis and a supplier of wire formed products to the principal lawn mower companies. Argo Products also provides metal stampings and welded assemblies with robotic cells that have seam tracking, touch sensory capabilities, and spot welding capabilities. Argo Products also performs flattening, piercing, offsetting, and drilling services. The company employs approximately 125 people.

Argo Products believed obtaining ISO registration would help it become more efficient, improve part costs, and expand sales. Argo Products contacted the Missouri Enterprise Business Assistance Center (Missouri Enterprise) to help identify areas in which current practices did not meet all the requirements of the ISO standard. Together, Missouri Enterprise and Argo Products developed an ISO action plan and assigned various tasks to individuals within Argo Products. During regular visits, Missouri Enterprise personnel monitored, mentored, and provided assistance with task accomplishment while developing new and refined systems. In some instances Missouri Enterprise performed specified ISO tasks. Internal auditing, a new practice at Argo, required specific training. The many types of documents used at Argo made document control a complex and difficult task. Because up to five different languages are spoken among employees at Argo, the documents required visual graphics and translation to multiple languages.

Missouri Enterprise also delivered ISO training (with the assistance of an interpreter) to employees in preparation to be measured not in terms of number of parts, but rather number of correct parts. Union personnel participated in and became a part of the success of the project. To internalize the new ISO policies, management introduced an "Argo ISO Card." Each employee's card is punched every time s/he correctly states the new quality policy. The punches can be redeemed any time for a free soft drink for one punch or a free lunch for five punches.

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STATE STATS

DATA* COVERS JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2001

Number of projects completed with firms
255

Number of firms served
284

Number of firms served for the first time
206

Federal cost share for current operating year
\$2,109,700

State/other cost share for current operating year
\$4,219,400

**Data as reported from center*

DATA** COVERS JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2001

Increased sales & retained sales
\$30,951,000

Client capital investment
\$9,024,725

Total cost savings
\$3,487,000

Jobs (created & retained)
260

***Source: Independent client impact survey*

**For additional information,
contact Dede McMahon 301-975-5020**



Argo Products achieved ISO 9002 certification in April 2002, and is currently performing data analysis and compliance actions to upgrade to the new 2000 standard. Benefits of the company's ISO preparation processes include a switch from hand sorting to measuring internal defects in terms of parts per million, a \$500,000 capital investment, improved skill-level among employees, and a \$2 million sales increase. Argo's subsequent growth resulted in the creation of 100 new jobs.

ROM Corporation Achieves ISO 9001:2000 Certification

The ROM Corporation, located in Belton, Missouri, designs and manufactures bulkheads, ramps, and closures primarily for the food distribution industry, roll-up doors (shutters) for the fire apparatus and emergency vehicle industry, and closures for the architectural security industry. The company employs less than 250 people.

In late 2000, ROM decided that certification to an internationally recognized quality standard would provide it with a marketing edge and offer opportunities to identify improvements in product quality and internal management discipline. ROM contacted the Missouri Enterprise Business Assistance Center (Missouri Enterprise) for technical assistance in the development of a quality management system compliant to the ISO standard. Missouri Enterprise conducted a compliance gap analysis in February of 2001 and began providing assistance in March of the same year. Because of the organization's close working relationship with the State of Missouri's Department of Economic Development, Missouri Enterprise was able to help ROM apply for and obtain funding assistance that reimbursed the company for 50 percent of the cost of assistance.

Over the course of the next year, Missouri Enterprise provided weekly project management, expertise, and training to develop the ISO-required documentation, and implementation assistance to conform to ISO 9001:2000. During this time, Missouri Enterprise documented ROM's key manufacturing processes, established baseline performance measurements, and logged and analyzed non-conformities. Improvement efforts resulted in significant reductions in scrap, rework, waste, and reduced down time. The culmination of these activities yielded a customer satisfaction rating which far exceeded ROM's initial goal. ROM was recommended for ISO 9001: 2000 registration by TUV Management Service only after an intense audit in late March 2002. With this recommendation, the company became one of the first organizations in the world to be certified to the newly released standard (released 12/15/00) with absolutely no non-conformities noted.