Touring Tech – Manufacturers Find Value When They See What ISU Can Do

Nathan Meyer was no stranger to CIRAS, but he wasn’t fully aware of all the research and services the Iowa State University Community can offer businesses. So when CIRAS invited him to take a CIRAS-led tour of campus research labs in the fall of 2017, he jumped at the opportunity.

"One of the things I saw on the lab tour was the ability for a couple of their devices to produce a certain gas," Meyer said. "That was new to me, something that I hadn’t thought of before. It’s something we’re planning to do in the coming month."

The Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) seeks to make Iowa better by educating its businesses about the latest research-proven methods and best practices of industry. Here are just a few of the ways we plan to do that in the coming month.

Upcoming Conferences, Trainings, and Workshops

Find out more and join us on a Lab Tour!

Fort Dodge Finds Efficiency, Better Service Through Lean

City Manager, Fort Dodge Mike Fierke

For a city manager who’s had almost 40 years of experience in numerous roles, Mike Fierke is a relatively new city manager, really. He came to Fort Dodge in 2009 and asked what Fierke, the then-CIRAS Manager for the City of Fort Dodge's first Lean events in 2009 and beyond.

"He came to me and he said, ‘Mike, I want to change how pothole-filling works in Fort Dodge. The pothole-filling process, they were relying on a lot of time and miscommunication and checklists, and a lot of holes were found and we had to change the way he filled the pothole,'" Fierke said. "The pothole-filling process, they were relying on a lot of time and miscommunication and checklists, and a lot of holes were found and we had to change the way he filled the pothole." But there was a lot more to it than that.

Plus, there were issues with the way we were storing the patch material... We ended up finding a much more efficient way to do it.”

Through Lean, Fort Dodge has made significant improvements to its businesses, including reducing the time it takes to fill potholes, improving communication among employees, and reducing waste.

Meanwhile, businesses outside of Fort Dodge have also benefited from CIRAS's efforts.

"The CIRAS team really understands the needs of the businesses they serve and always puts their customers first," Fierke said. "I think that’s why they’re so successful, this was an opportunity to get a pulse on what’s going on in American manufacturing these days."

The Future of Manufacturing

Scott Parker
City Manager, Fort Dodge

There has been much news about the success of Lean methodology in improving efficiency and reducing waste in manufacturing and service industries. But what about the future of manufacturing? What role will technology play in shaping the future of manufacturing?

"It’s a work-in-progress," Parker said. "But it’s a direction we’re headed in. We need to keep looking for ways to make our processes better."

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Ontario, and everywhere in between, the top point of interest at that point in time… Basically, I saw that there were several advantages to their products, their markets, and their approaches to business. So, what’s going on in American manufacturing these days? Many who follow the industry have been looking for answers to this question.

"One of the things I saw on the lab tour was the ability for a couple of their devices to produce a certain gas," Meyer said. "That was new to me, something that I hadn’t thought of before. It’s something we’re planning to do in the coming month."

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