

# RESULTS

Dur-A-Flex, Inc. located in East Hartford, Connecticut has over 40 years of experience in commercial and industrial flooring systems and polymer components - epoxies, urethanes and methyl methacrylates (MMA) plus premium colored quartz aggregates. Since 1991, the workforce has increased from 20 employees, also known as co-owners, to more than 60. In an effort to remain competitive, the company recently set new financial goals that surpassed any prior goals in Dur-A-Flex's history; and in order to achieve these goals and retain its current workforce, several processes at Dur-A-Flex required improvements or upgrades.

One such area was the company's computer system. After spending months meeting with several different information technology contractors and not receiving the results they had hoped for, officials at Dur-A-Flex were unsure of how to proceed. A Dur-A-Flex executive saw an ad for CONNSTEP in the Hartford Business Journal and after calling, Dur-A-Flex found that CONNSTEP was the answer to more than just their computer needs; CONNSTEP offered programs, such as operational assessments, Lean Solutions and environmental management, that could help Dur-A-Flex in all areas of their operations.

Dur-A-Flex chose CONNSTEP to aide with the implementation of a new computer system. CONNSTEP acted as Dur-A-Flex's advocate – a liaison between suppliers and vendors during the months leading up to the implementation phase. Once the implementation phase began, CONNSTEP'S commitment continued, working with Dur-A-Flex nearly two days a week for nine months, ensuring a smooth and successful transition.

"CONNSTEP is known throughout Connecticut for providing affordable manufacturing consulting services - the same services for which larger manufacturers can afford to pay larger consulting firms – but cost-prohibitive to the small and medium sized companies," according to Bill Greider, Operations Manager at Dur-A-Flex. Greider, who admits he has a "warm spot in his heart for CONNSTEP," is thankful that CONNSTEP makes it possible for the "little guys" to access the same consulting services that the "big guys" do. In addition, Greider said that CONNSTEP staff is well-versed in small business needs and the staff is always accessible to the Dur-A-Flex team.

With that, it comes as no surprise that when Dur-A-Flex was looking to develop a new strategic plan and needed to double sales without negatively impacting their workforce, they again turned to their business ally, CONNSTEP. CONNSTEP Account Manager Dave Long along with Lean Manufacturing Specialist Bruce Ireland worked with the Dur-A-Flex team and recommended that they look at the entire operation as a whole value stream, not just as individual departments or processes, and utilize Lean Manufacturing not only to achieve their

**Dur-A-Flex, Inc.**  
East Hartford, Connecticut  
60 employees  
[www.dur-a-flex.com](http://www.dur-a-flex.com)

## Lean Solutions

- \$12K annual utility savings
- 400% sales increase
- 66% reduction in finished goods inventory



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business goals, but also to guide Dur-A-Flex in becoming a Lean Enterprise.

In the past two years, Dur-A-Flex has received additional mentoring and training from CONNSTEP, some of which was paid for by the Northeast Utilities PRIME Program and resulted in a sustained annual utilities savings of \$12,000. Additionally, utilizing CONNSTEP services in the areas of Lean Manufacturing and Quality Management Systems, Dur-A-Flex has increased their sales by nearly 400 percent.

In addition to increasing sales and cutting costs, Dur-A-Flex has eliminated two-thirds of their inventory through the use of Lean Manufacturing. According to Greider, the benefit of utilizing Lean Manufacturing solutions is that Dur-A-Flex is able to concentrate on "where the company is," and "where the company is going." By focusing on future goals, Greider believes that they will be able to develop a map for sustained long-term growth. "CONNSTEP put it in perspective for us," says Greider, "and not just on a management level." Greider has seen a real shift in a "sense of ownership" among the co-owners since working with Lean methodologies through CONNSTEP.

In order to guide the enterprise-wide Lean implementation, Greider and Dur-A-Flex Vice President Nick Wallick become certified Continuous Improvement Champions through the CONNSTEP Continuous Improvement Champion Certification (CICC) Program. During the CICC Program, Lean tools and methodologies are taught along with how to run a kaizen event and the "soft skills" of team building and facilitation.

Dur-A-Flex has implemented weekly "Lean" meetings where team members are engaged in the continuous improvement initiative and are "assigned" weekly reading and quizzes to further their Lean learning. Greider likes to refer to these educational sessions as "Dur-A-Flex University," where everyone from management to the janitorial staff are educated on the procedures and processes of the organization.

Employees are often asked during these meetings to look at the others and ask themselves, "Where would I be without the person to my left or right." This attitude is owner Bob Smith's way of maintaining the company philosophy, "You are your own boss. You only work for yourself." Dur-A-Flex was recently named "One of the Best Places to Work in Connecticut," an employee-nominated award sponsored by the Hartford Business Journal.

With continued consulting and guidance from CONNSTEP coupled with the professional development of the Dur-A-Flex workforce and implementation of Lean Manufacturing methodologies, Dur-A-Flex plans to challenge for the Connecticut Shingo Prize in 2008. Administered by CONNSTEP, The Shingo prize is Connecticut's premier manufacturing award program for attaining world-class excellence. Dur-A-Flex is confident that with the new processes in place they can be a contender and beyond that, reach their long-term sales goal by 2011.

"Every time we came to a fork in the road, we were able to compete with the big guys in the field, thanks to CONNSTEP's numerous resources and dedication.

CONNSTEP's resources have allowed us to turn Lean Manufacturing into more than just a process - it's become a way of life at Dur-A-Flex."

Bill Greider  
Operations Manager  
Dur-A-Flex, Inc.

Dur-A-Flex recognizes that CONNSTEP has made it possible for them to compete with the "big guys" in their industry, such as Benjamin Moore and Sherman Williams and in return, Dur-A-Flex has been a supporter of CONNSTEP, and the Connecticut manufacturing industry as a whole, by participating in legislative events and speaking to their local legislators about the issues that face manufacturing businesses and how Dur-A-Flex has benefited from CONNSTEP's services.

Bill sums it all up, "CONNSTEP's resources have allowed us to turn Lean Manufacturing into more than just a process - it's become a way of life at Dur-A-Flex."

