

# WEST LIBERTY FOODS

*West Liberty Foods implements Leading2Lean CloudDISPATCH to save \$2 million in maintenance costs, achieve 89% utilization of its workforce, improve operational availability and reduce employee turnover.*

## Executive Summary

Executives at meat processor West Liberty Foods felt they could improve operations but needed a way to identify and solve inefficiencies stemming from a complex, manual data-entry system and lag time in understanding maintenance issues. After implementing Leading2Lean's Lean Execution System, CloudDISPATCH, the company saved \$2 million in maintenance costs by tracking where money was being spent on materials and employee time. West Liberty Foods has also reduced employee turnover by 50 percent, achieved 89% utilization of its maintenance workforce and improved operational availability in at least one of its plants to 96%, an increase of nearly 10 percent.

## About West Liberty Foods

West Liberty Foods, based in West Liberty, Iowa, is one of the largest turkey processors in the United States. It was formed in 1996 under the guiding principles of the Iowa Turkey Growers Cooperative, which carries on Iowa's rich farming tradition. Their grower/owners are committed to animal health and welfare while delivering superior-quality turkeys—a philosophy that has helped family farms grow and thrive for generations. The continued success of West Liberty Foods is due to the dedication, enthusiasm and support of its grower/owners.

West Liberty Foods owns four meat-processing plants and a cold storage distribution center. The company produces prepared beef, turkey, chicken and pork products mainly as white labels for large national foodservice and grocery retailer customers. Customers rely on West Liberty Foods to consistently deliver products on time while adhering to the highest food safety standards. Production lines must be reliable in their high-volume factories and all manufacturing policies and procedures must be documented for USDA and other government regulatory inspectors.

## WLF's Maintenance Challenge

While maintenance technicians and leadership in the plants were diligent in taking notes, recording paperwork, and inputting data into their existing operations system, technicians had a difficult time finding and analyzing the data to make the best business decisions. If the team wanted reports, they had to request them from the IT department. They weren't able to get a full view of what was happening in the plants because they couldn't see the data in time to react to a problem. Between recording the information and running the reports, it was on average three to four days before the team really knew what was happening in the plant. With manual entry of line and machine abnormality data, important data sometimes wouldn't get recorded at all, or it became lost.



Record Information  
& Run Reports

ON AVERAGE  
**3-4 DAYS**  
BEFORE FINDING ISSUES



Equipment Failures  
& Plant Activity

West Liberty Food's leadership determined that they needed a software that would provide the right data delivered to the right people at the right time, which was while production was in process, not after. The goal was to provide plant managers with plant floor clarity so the maintenance team could be more effective at proactive activities and not limited to responding to the same equipment failures over and over.

## The Solution

After assessing other CMMS alternatives, West Liberty Foods selected Leading2Lean's Lean Execution System, CloudDISPATCH, because it digitalized the company's maintenance function. Not only were dispatches initiated by line operators in the same software that tracks their resolution, maintenance leadership finally had insights into how to effectively increase operational availability and manage their assets.

### **Saved \$2 Million in Maintenance Costs**

Deploying CloudDISPATCH saved West Liberty Foods \$2 million in maintenance costs and continues to deliver a solid ROI. The software helps West Liberty Foods reduce its cost of spares by revealing where ongoing machine abnormalities occur so that maintenance technicians aren't always reacting, but instead engaging in preventive maintenance through problem solving. Because CloudDISPATCH maintains digital records of abnormality trends and resolutions, technicians easily access machine history, an important benefit in their highly regulated manufacturing environment.

Like all food manufacturers, West Liberty Foods has sanitation prerequisites in order to enter a production area. Maintenance technicians must follow a careful protocol, dress in protective equipment and perform work on complex food manufacturing equipment. In the past, if they found a component that needed to be replaced, they would have to leave the room, remove their gear, obtain the component from the spares department, and then start the process again. With Leading2Lean, spares are ordered while in the task and parts are delivered to the maintenance technician. "Keeping the technician on the job saves a lot of time for us," said Chad Williams, Corporate Maintenance Manager.

### **Resource/Workforce Utilization at 88.5 Percent**

Before Leading2Lean, West Liberty Foods didn't have a real-time reporting system to truly measure workforce utilization. Today, West Liberty Foods tracks all tasks in real-time. Because of this view, the company was able to identify and act on opportunities to improve efficiency in both small and large ways.

## Operational Availability Improved by 10%

In the first West Liberty Foods facility where Leading2Lean was deployed, machine uptime (operational availability) was at 86.6%. After two years, the same facility led the company at 96.3%, nearly a 10% improvement. One of the key driving factors is that Leading2Lean gave the company visibility into the manufacturing process and provided team members the ability to drill down to issues. The maintenance team was able to put in place a preventive and predictive maintenance schedule to prevent those problems from happening again. Even more importantly, Leading2Lean's intuitive UI drove technician use and empowered them to solve problems.

The Leading2Lean scheduler has assisted first-line supervisors to be more effective schedulers to manage maintenance technicians' time. Also, it helped the company to standardize work and reporting companywide so leadership and maintenance staff could determine where to focus efforts. Even with four locations, leadership can see what's happening with all machines companywide, such as which ones are the worst performing so the company can determine where to invest capital dollars in repair or replacement. Seeing which mechanics are engaged or not engaged, and what equipment is down, opened the eyes of the maintenance team and of senior leadership.

"Leading2Lean helps our maintenance teams maintain a world-class standard," said Williams.

"Everyone has real-time visibility into what's happening at our plant. If we have a problem, we can quickly get to the root cause of it. Leading2Lean has not only saved us money, but it has also improved our processes and made us more productive with the resources we have."

## Improved Employee Engagement

Employees who were worried about visibility into their daily task management became advocates once they experienced firsthand the insights real-time data provided. "They have come to see it as an indispensable tool in their work," Williams said.

Because of greater transparency and accountability with Leading2Lean, West Liberty Foods has seen an improvement in company culture—one of greater transparency, accountability and engagement. With Leading2Lean, along with other company initiatives, employee turnover at West Liberty Foods has been reduced by 50 percent. The ease of use, even for those employees who have little knowledge of computer systems, has allowed them to quickly engage with CloudDISPATCH.

## Tracking USDA Guidelines and Procedures for Food Safety and Inspections.

Because the company is handling perishable food items, West Liberty Foods has strict company guidelines and procedures, along with defined regulations required by the USDA.

"We use specific chemicals, ammonia refrigeration and isolation as part of our food safety process," Williams said. "The USDA requires that we have a clearly defined process that we follow consistently. The software allows for easy and clear visibility into this process which has been great in working with the USDA."

**\$2 MILLION**

Savings in maintenance costs

**50%**

Reduction in employee turnover rates

**89%**

Utilization of maintenance workforce and resources

**10%**

Increase in operational availability in plants

## Summary

Leading2Lean has helped improve West Liberty Foods' maintenance and operations at its plants, saving \$2 million in maintenance costs. The company has also reduced employee turnover by 50 percent, achieved 89 percent utilization of its maintenance workforce and improved operational availability in at least one of the plants to 96 percent—an increase of nearly 10 percent.