

# Success in Operations

*Adoption of 5S/Workplace Organization leads to an increase in workplace safety and production efficiencies*

## CHEMTOOL



500 Employees



Rockton, Illinois



[www.chemtool.com](http://www.chemtool.com)

### SITUATION

Chemtool is an industry leader in manufacturing and formulating greases and functional fluids. Through continuous investments in infrastructure and product development, they've earned the reputation for meeting quality performance standards and exceeding customer expectations.

Prior to working with IMEC, Chemtool operated on an old school system and had no knowledge of lean principles. They ran everything by slapping equipment in place and going with however things flowed. The disorganization and often crowded storage areas led to poor production efficiency and higher safety risk than they would've liked. To create and maintain a well-oiled machine (operation), Chemtool adopted the 5S Workplace Organization methodology as a good place to start by getting equipment and supplies in a spot that was useful to improve production efficiencies and continue meeting the gold standard for customers.

### SOLUTION

The company originally worked with IMEC at the end of December 2018. The initial training included the 5S concepts of Sort, Set, Shine, Standardize and Sustain. This training was well attended with a cross-functional group of employees in the class, and they went through one of the easier areas to see how well they handled it internally. After a few months and seeing the benefits of the first training on the test area, they engaged IMEC a second time in March 2019 to conduct a program focusing on "train the trainer". To support the initial training, they applied 5S to a more complicated area to make sure they were really grasping the principles. This time around, the IMEC expert conducted oversight training and through observation, supported Rich Roehrig, Continuous Improvement Coordinator at Chemtool, as he led the training. Since then, Chemtool has been successfully implementing the techniques learned from the 5S training.

This being the first lean project for Chemtool, they wanted to address a few key issues such as workplace safety, inefficiencies, unorganized zones, and time spent searching for equipment that they could not remember where they last placed them. They wanted to be more focused on problem solving, point of use, and workflows and for these reasons, focusing on workplace organization through 5S, made sense.

With a goal to be fully implemented through the facility by the end of 2019, they are already 42% there - thanks to how they've broken out the areas - and they are keeping on track with results to improve safety, quality, production efficiency, and waste reduction.

The response from employees regarding the changes has been outstanding. Roehrig shared that "Management likes seeing improvement in the numbers as we go through this transition. Visitors love seeing a cleaner, more organized, and colorful plant. This training really ties in with the accountability culture we are developing here. All the ideas for the improvements and everything, including where this is all going, comes from the floor - it's all ground up. Management, Supervisors, and I are here to provide the tools necessary to institute the improvements the employees need. So, the ownership of it, along with the enthusiasm from the employees doing the work every day, is really high and exciting to see."



[info@imec.org](mailto:info@imec.org) | 888-806-4632

## RESULTS

Upon conclusion of the 5S training, the employees want to contribute and work more, which leads to an overall better environment. It is safe to say that Chemtool has experienced a culture shift more than anything. Of course with this, comes the improvement in production numbers and efficiencies.

5S is the foundation for all of the continuous improvement efforts at Chemtool. This sets the groundwork for their future problem solving initiative, and then they'll act on implementing more lean concepts. Getting everyone involved from ground up is key for Chemtool; this includes every single employee completing the workshop training. Roehrig notes that, "It just opens up the thought process in the day to day activities and continuously improves every aspect of business today." The 5S implementation at the Rockton plant aligns with several other ongoing projects. There is a big 2019 cost saving initiative and a full lean implementation (not just 5S) for a visual factory, and this training is proving to be a significant contributor to all of their goals and objectives for this year.

The company is already seeing notable improvements from those initiatives. Roehrig added: "The little bit of 5S we plug into place makes Chemtool a safer and better place to work, which obviously adds to our cost savings. This enables everyone to focus on improvements rather than on failure, to be more proactive rather than reactive."

- Improved production efficiencies
- Lowered quality incidents
- Lowered safety incident rate – safer work environment
- Improved cost saving
- Reduced waste

“ *There is nothing better than watching the people doing the work every day take ownership of the process and do it with enthusiasm. The training we received from IMEC got us started down that path, and it's the best path we could possibly be on.* ”

– Rich Roehrig, Continuous Improvement Coordinator - Chemtool



info@imec.org | 888-806-4632