

METCALF & ASSOCIATES GUIDES MEADWESTVACO DIVISION THROUGH SUCCESSFUL PLANT CLOSING AND COACHES EMPLOYEES THROUGH TRANSITION

PROFILE:

MeadWestvaco, a global packaging company operating in 30 countries is known for its brands in healthcare, personal and beauty care, food, beverage, media and entertainment, and home and garden industries. The company employs 22,000 people worldwide and serves customers in 100 nations. In 2009, an effort to strategically reduce costs and overhead included plans to close its MWV Calmar, a pump and dispensing manufacturing and distribution operations located in Washington Court House, Ohio.

The company consolidated production and equipment with San Luis Potosi and moved from Washington Court House to an outside contractor in Monterey Mexico, which is more seamlessly scalable and features more advanced production equipment and processes.

CHALLENGE/VISION:

Calmar had been a longtime, sizable employer in the southern Ohio town of Washington Courthouse—employing 334 people. Plant closings impact the lives of workers and their families as well as the economic stability of a town when located in a rural area.

Thomas Payton, Human Resources Manager, Calmar, Inc., had been working on his master's degree with a specific focus on developing hardiness and resilience for employees. With this insight, Thomas sought the help of Metcalf & Associates to help plan for the closing and the support and transition for the employees.

"I was looking for an organization to help facilitate the process of closing the plant and specifically the human resource issues that we were facing. We choose Metcalf & Associates because of their experience in building resilience among employees," explained Payton.

"I had a good relationship with employees and the union and also know that bringing in someone from outside the company had benefits," noted Payton.

SOLUTION:

Metcalf & Associates worked with Payton and the plant manager to develop a plan for transition and also provided coaching for the employees during the plant closing. Metcalf worked with the group by teaching resilience workshops, coaching the leaders during transition, and coaching Payton on how to manage and lead the group through the changes they were about to experience.

"Belinda Gore, a psychologist and veteran executive coach at Metcalf, gave a workshop for key members of management, hourly employees and some union members in which we discussed the aspects of hardiness during change. It went very well and our employees felt that Belinda related really well with them," said Payton.

Gore focused on the "four Cs" – Commitment, Control, Challenge and Connection, to help employees prepare for the transition and plan for their future. Employees were asked to identify who they were committed to and encouraged to stay connected with people during the process. Managers were also involved in special workshops on how to manage their own transition while supporting their employees and professionally closing the plant.

"Todd Wiget, plant manager, and I held meetings in which we acknowledged the grief process for employees and spent time talking and listening to individual's experiences. In effect, we helped to 'normalize the anger of the experience,'" explained Payton.

RESULTS:

"You don't want to hear your plant is closing or that you may grow from the experience. Metcalf & Associates helped us chunk down the problems into manageable pieces and gain a sense of control during the transition. They did this by providing tools for employees to develop their own manageable steps to resolve issues," said Payton.

"Metcalf & Associates" helped to validate some of the work we were doing inside the company and provided a confidential outside point of support for employees which was important," noted Payton.

"Belinda Gore and Maureen Metcalf at Metcalf & Associates both worked with me and the team to help us keep our sanity during stressful times," added Payton.

The results of working with Metcalf & Associates were very apparent for Calmar. For example, during the transition, it's not unusual for a plant to incur more accidents. However at Calmar, safety measures during the transition were higher than previous years during the transition and all of their production and delivery goals were met.

"Our plant made a profit two months beyond what corporate expected. The combined efforts of Metcalf's team and our own staff helped to bolster morale and had a positive impact on the business. People really owned their integrity," said Payton.

"We had a sister plant in which the transition didn't go well, they had to close early due to issues. The stats show that this process works with employees and it's successful," added Payton.