



- Company:** Willo Products Co., Inc.  
 Contact: Lynn Ozier, President  
 2115 Bassett Avenue  
 Decatur, Alabama 35602  
 (256) 353-7161
- Company Profile:** *Willo Products, founded in Decatur, Alabama in 1945 as a structural steel fabricator, is now a leading equipment manufacturer and construction contractor for the detention industry. Employing approximately 100 people, Willo provides a wide range of products, including metal furniture, bar doors, sliding doors, bullet-proof glass, and electronic controls. The company manufactures some products for use in their construction projects and purchases others from outside vendors.*
- Situation:** In late 1996, Willo president Lynn Ozier was considering bringing the production of hollow metal doors and frames in-house rather than obtaining them from another supplier. He realized that in order to be competitive, it was going to be necessary to improve efficiency in the plant, possibly through the implementation of manufacturing cells. Ozier researched the topic, spoke with consultants, and in early 1997 attended a “Lean Manufacturing” seminar hosted by the Manufacturing Extension Program at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. The presentation helped refine his understanding of the lean manufacturing principles and solidified his decision to move toward cellular manufacturing at Willo.
- ATN @ UAH Assistance:** UAH Manufacturing Extension Program staff met with Mr. Ozier and, based on the needs at Willo, recommended the company contract with High Focused Improvements, Inc. for continuous process improvement training and development of manufacturing cells. High Focused is a Decatur, Alabama based consulting firm and has worked on several successful projects with UAH MEP. The firm conducted a three day Kaizen event at Willo, with a one day follow up event. A Kaizen event is a focused, cross-functional team effort to improve a specific process and consists of both training and implementation of improvements.
- Results:** Since the initial Kaizen event with High Focused Improvements, Willo has begun conducting another event every two weeks. The events are half or whole day efforts, and employees have been successful in greatly improving many processes in the plant. For example, a sub assembly process that in the past had taken approximately fifty minutes was reduced to only eighteen minutes. The time required for another assembly was cut by nearly thirty percent. Overall efficiency in the plant has improved greatly, and additional gains continue to be realized as the events continue and additional data is collected.

*“We are indebted to UAH for expanding our understanding of cellular manufacturing.”*



PROVIDING SOLUTIONS  
TO ALABAMA INDUSTRY

An affiliate of the ARS Extension Partnership. For further information on the Alabama Technology Network, please contact (256) 644-4771