

Elzinga & Hoeksema Implements Lean Flow and Finds 100,000 Flats of Additional Capacity

**ELZINGA &
HOEKSEMA
GREENHOUSES**



Mark Elzinga is no stranger to investigating new concepts and ideas that will better his business - Elzinga and Hoeksema Greenhouses in Kalamazoo, MI. During the last couple of years Mark has invested time and money to construct a state of the art

organic greenhouse. Several trade magazines have recently detailed Mark's concepts in organic greenhouses. While implementing this huge project, Mark decided to implement Lean Flow at the same time. Most people would have had their plate full with just one project, Mark wanted to do both. To ensure both projects succeeded, Mark hired FlowVision® to help his company implement Lean Flow. There were three main areas that Mark wanted to focus on; production (transplanting), shipping and monocropping. In production and shipping Elzinga & Hoeksema achieved outstanding results in labor productivity by establishing Lean Flow techniques that made it easier to transplant and easier to pull orders and load trucks. The monocropping results were even more impressive. Elzinga & Hoeksema had always kicked the idea around but was never able to get it going. Since Lean Flow is mathematically based FlowVision was able to

successfully help them achieve the desired results. Many people would think that Lean Flow has nothing to do with monocropping Think again.

This past growing season two of FlowVision® senior consultants (Steve Forkey and Creg Pike) worked with Mark and his Lean Flow team. They worked on the concept of organizing Elzinga's Greenhouses and lay down space to communize varieties. An approach which is better known as monocropping.

By taking this approach to growing, not only were the original goals exceeded, but additional benefits were discovered. Some of the benefits achieved were increased turns in the greenhouse, productivity improvements equating to a 25% to 30%, the ability for the grower to specialize in a specific greenhouse. An interesting and unexpected benefit occurred in the area of quality. By monocropping specific varieties into a common space, there was more control over issues such as growth regulators, watering and the one surprising factor, the control over weather. The common space requirements translated to common growth requirements. The result was the quality of the product increased significantly.

Another benefit achieved was the ease in rolling the lay down space not only with the proper quantity of plants but also the proper color. Too many times consumer buying trends fluctuate year to year. Growers try to forecast production requirements based on history and assumed growth trends within the industry. By combining monocropping techniques with the simple visual signal of consumption, Elzinga & Hoeksema was able to react to the trends in the market. Roger Rosenthal, Head Grower for Elzinga & Hoeksema Greenhouses stated, "If I saw that pink impatiens was the hot ticket, I knew immediately to increase production on pink when I refill the open space". This is a Lean Flow technique known as Kanban - (Replenishment based on consumption). By focusing production on replenishing what the consumers need, Elzinga and Hoeksema was able to not only keep up with the trend in the market, but also bleed down the inventory that was not selling. The result opened up more space for the proper mix of product. The biggest benefit of this project was increased capacity. Mark Elzinga stated, "We found another 100,000 flats". Elzinga was able to produce an additional 100,000 flats of plants in the same space without having to spend any money on additional greenhouse space.

The determination at the end of the season was that monocropping products and implementing Lean Flow

techniques was a tremendous benefit to the organization. Mark is now in the process of setting up next year's production requirements with the intent of monocropping all of their facilities. With continuous improvement exercises such as Lessons Learned meetings concerning last year's crop and additional Lean Flow training sessions, Elzinga & Hoeksema are expecting another very successful season. Although Mark has successfully implemented Lean Flow out in the Greenhouses, he is not done yet. He has recently begun implementing Lean Flow in the Office. The same principles and techniques that are applied out on the floor will be applied in the office.



How can Lean Flow help your business achieve results like Elzinga and Hoeksema achieved - come to one of FlowVision's Lean Flow Workshops this fall.

Upcoming FlowVision® Lean Flow Workshops and Events

Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association	New England Greenhouse Conference & Expo	FlowVision Lean Flow Workshop for the Green Industry
		
Orange County	Worcester,	West Palm Beach, FL - October 14 - 15

Convention Center Orlando, FL September 25-27	MA November 6 - 7	& Denver, CO - November 11 - 12
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Location	Dates	Cost
West Palm Beach, Florida	October 14 - 15, 2008	\$1,100
Denver, CO	November 13 - 14, 2008	\$1,100

To register for any of the FlowVision workshops please contact Gary Cortés at 561.301.8740 or via e-mail at Cortes@flowvision.com

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