

# Case Study



Anton Cabinetry



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## Executive Summary

The success of Anton Cabinetry had covered shortcomings in operations and management. Problems manifest themselves in workflow delays, a breakdown in inter-department operations, charging high prices to support lower margins. A perfect storm of issues including a year of uncontrolled growth, the need for a succession plan and increased competition in their market all pressured the company to seek solutions. They reached out to Lean Partners for their Lean transformation.

With management buy-in Lean Partners helped Anton first build trust in management's ability to solve problems, then helped them reduce their non-value added activities. Now, with Lean firmly ingrained into the company, management working with their leadership teams has made significant improvements in lead times and profits. There is now an improved corporate culture resulting in a 20% reduction in employee cost.

## About Anton Cabinetry

Anton Cabinetry is a custom cabinetry and architectural millwork company specializing in the design, fabrication and installation of commercial casework, architectural millwork and store fixtures. The company sells through architects for projects in hospitals, churches, dormitories, conference rooms, store fixtures and corporate reception, lobbies and work areas. Anton Cabinetry supports clients country wide from its central Dallas/Fort Worth location.

## The Challenge

Over 30 years Anton Cabinetry had developed successful products manufactured according to their own systems and processes. Anton has enjoyed some success and a solid reputation for product design and quality. But it came at a cost. As a custom cabinet maker each project is unique, they had yet to find a way to standardize processes to generate economies. Between 75-80% of their production schedule is driven by construction industry timelines so they were producing custom products at off the shelf timelines. Anton had also fallen behind in their designs, the application of new technology and overlooked the experience and knowledge their work force could contribute.

The desire to catch up became important when they recognized the need to combat heavy competition, improve products, production, deadlines and working conditions, plus create a succession/exit plan.

Anton investigated a Lean transformation and based on the benefits bought “The 5S Field Guide”. After their best effort to implement what they read they realized it to be more than they were prepared to do themselves while also running the company. They did learn there was much a Lean transformation could do to improve their situation.

"Once, Lean started taking hold, the culture at Anton Cabinetry is better than it has ever been," commented Joey Anton.

## Implementing Lean

They went with the people who wrote the book -- Lean Partners. Lean Partners took them through the process, both from the people managerial side and from the technical side. Less a sales call than a deep look at the company, the engagement meetings, solid advice and well-rounded approach exposed many areas of possible improvement and gave Anton the faith that Lean Partners understood the challenges. Anton Cabinetry committed to a brighter future and began the transformation, guided by Lean Partners.

Lean Partners helped instill the tenets of Lean, including 5S and 7 Wastes, into Anton Cabinetry's people and processes. As is common with any major change, there was resistance, but Lean Partners really helped overcome this roadblock. "They really worked on the people side – 90% was people, the other 10% was Lean tools," said Joey Anton. Through building trust, open communication, frequent training, and an understanding that this was a long-term change, not just another quick fix, Anton Cabinetry addressed this problem.

## Results and the Road Ahead

Lean Partners joined Anton in developing the leadership. Early tactics like moving appropriate decisions from management to the production floor, instituting regular meetings and sharing the performance through metrics made the move to an improved company visible.

The open communication helped Anton to shift to a production system that better matched their product mix and tight production schedules and eliminated the need for constant overtime to meet deadlines. Regular meetings of interdepartmental leaders has focused the leadership team on strategic plans and execution.

"Once, Lean started taking hold, the culture at Anton Cabinetry is better than it has ever been," commented Joey Anton. They have the "wind in our sails" and they are enjoying a different approach. But, the overall biggest benefit is that it's now a "better place to work."

With the help of Lean Partners, things are better in all parts of the company, engineering, design, production and installation. There is a standardized foundation for products which improved everything downstream and freed resources to grow the business. Profits at Anton Cabinetry are higher, the volume of work is up, and through process standardization, they have cut employee costs 20%.

Anton Cabinetry shares many of the ills of successful companies today where problems that have no solution mount and threaten future growth. Lean was able to show Anton how the business could be improved while it continued to operate. Anton Cabinetry's success can be attributed to Lean, but also to the hard work, perseverance, and eagerness of its employees, along with the guidance and help from Lean Partners. Lean is a top-down process, but requires the whole company to work in collaboration to realize the increases in production and improvements in culture that create a truly Lean company.

Visit [www.leanpartners.com](http://www.leanpartners.com) to learn more about the 5S book, The 5S Field Guide.