

## GEORGIA-PACIFIC BUENA PARK CONVERTS PAIN INTO GAIN—WITH KIWIPLAN'S HELP

“Increase throughput!” “Improve on-time deliveries!” “Communicate—make sure the left hand knows what the right hand is doing!” Sound familiar? Such are the monumental mandates corrugating plants face daily in order to succeed in the highly competitive marketplace.

In January 2001 Georgia-Pacific (G-P) Buena Park, California faced these challenges head-on and turned to Kiwiplan consultants to lend a hand. Together, they embarked on a yearlong Kiwiplan Value-Creation Activity (V-CA) consultancy project that has significantly changed their culture and improved the way they do business. Looking back, **Bob Walton, General Manager of G-P Buena Park**, wonders how they ever got along without V-CA: “Over the past year we’ve become very dependent on the V-CA process as a tool and realize how difficult it would be not to use it, especially for throughput purposes.”

### WHAT IS V-CA?

**Dirk Pastoor, Kiwiplan’s Sales Manager** explains, “Customers readily see the power of Kiwiplan’s products and their ability to make a big positive difference to the bottom line. To realize the benefits, however, changes often need to be made in business process, attitude, and plant culture, and this process sometimes needs a helping hand. We facilitate the change process by helping to set goals, chart a course of action, and set about to maximize the use of all of the plant’s current assets, not just our software and systems.”

Different from the standard consulting routine, V-CA is a step-by-step approach to help corrugating and packaging plants optimize every aspect of their organizations, including use of their software as well as plant procedures and practices. The V-CA process is “hands-on” working with plant personnel—from senior management to the crews—establishing a course of action to best address the specific needs of the plant. All aspects of the plant’s operations are reviewed—from top to bottom—and the greatest opportunities for improvement are identified. Once improvement opportunities are recognized, an implementation and action strategy is put into place. Resultant improvements are then charted and presented to the management team.

**Wayne Stocks, Kiwiplan’s Manager of Consulting Services**, clarifies Kiwiplan’s experience: “Kiwiplan is uniquely qualified to offer these services on three counts. First, many of our consultants have decades of experience in the corrugating industry. Some have spent their entire working lives passionately attached to box making and finding ways to improve the process. We are dedicated industry professionals, not just outsiders who wouldn’t know a flute from a flexo. Second, nearly 50% of all integrated corrugating plants in the US (and over 400 worldwide) have committed to Kiwiplan software. This exposure and experience delivers a wealth of knowledge and ideas, which are uniquely available to Kiwiplan users. Third, our products are incredibly powerful. We can make a huge difference to the success and performance of a plant. I get a real high out of sharing our knowledge and seeing customers benefit as a result.”

### PROBLEM SOLVING TOOL—THAT WORKS!

Walton explains that one of the most significant gains attributed to V-CA involved communication: “V-CA puts everybody on a level playing field. Traditionally, when orders were overbooked or production was slow, finger pointing took place. Sales blamed manufacturing for slow production and manufacturing blamed sales for overbooking. Now everyone has a clear picture of what’s taking place. We know what’s booked on which machines, which customers need a rush order, what’s coming off each machine, and any machine downtimes and their causes. The communication is unbelievable; the finger pointing has been transformed into problem solving.”

He further explains that V-CA organizes everything and lays it out in a very matter-of-fact way so that everybody knows where the issues are: “People understand they have a job to do, so they do it. When machines are overloaded, everyone from the supervisor on down knows what they need to do to accomplish their goals. It’s now a pinpointed process for us to run the plant.”

For example, once they determined where the parameters should be, accomplishing fewer wet end changes and longer runs on the corrugator became fairly routine and automated. V-CA helped run the plant efficiently even

when light on business. “Running a plant of this size and magnitude is difficult when business is slow, and V-CA absolutely assisted us,” remarks Walton. “We expected V-CA to benefit us when we were busy. The fact that it has helped us when we were slow is a secondary benefit and a pleasant surprise.” Their ability to run “what if” scenarios has proven to be a tremendous management tool, according to Walton. With accuracy they can consider situations such as “What if we ran on Saturday, how would that help us?” or “What if we eliminate a shift on a particular machine?”

### INCREASED THROUGHPUT WITHOUT THE PAIN

The biggest breakthrough with V-CA, or the ‘shining star’ as Walton describes it, occurred near the end of 2001. He says, “As a major supplier to the California agricultural industry, we made it through a significant backlog in November and December that would normally have had us up against the wall. People who have been here 10-14 years told me that they have never seen us get through that kind of situation as easily and without confusion as we did during those months. By far, that was the best we have been able to do that.”

With V-CA the types of issues and questions they deal with have become more focused. “We are better able to respond to what’s specifically happening in the plant and in the market as far as sales go,” Walton explains. “For example, if a sales manager indicates that we’re going to be producing 200,000 extra cartons this week because lettuce is ‘hot’ right now, everyone starts thinking about what they need to do—such as, run more orders on a particular machine, order more paper, or schedule more trucks. The Kiwiplan system’s graphs show us what we need to do, and we can schedule our normal business to accommodate it. We can visibly see what’s happening.”

### INCREASED TRUST, EXPANDED DECISION-MAKING

V-CA has had a significant impact on Walton’s job as General Manager. He explains, “As a result of applying V-CA principles, I can now allow and trust individuals to make high level decisions. For example, customer service reps can now provide information to customers that previously could only be guaranteed by me as the GM. In addition,

sales people can completely rely on the information the customer service reps provide them about the ability to accommodate particular orders. It has relieved me of the day-to-day involvement and has given me the opportunity to look at what needs to happen three, four, or five days out. The opportunity to focus on the bigger picture has been tremendously advantageous to my job.”

### CUSTOMERS NOTICED, TOO!

Customers have noticed the improvements. Walton explains, “In place of the typical complaints, customers have given us rave reviews about how we’ve performed this year. Some of our biggest customers have commented about how reliable we’ve been. Seldom do we turn orders down. Instead, we bring them in and figure out how we’re going to make them work. Customers appreciate our responsiveness, and V-CA gave us the techniques to achieve it.”

### SUCCESS BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

Motivating individuals to change and trusting the system were the biggest challenges they faced while implementing V-CA. Walton comments, “We had to believe we were good enough to make it happen. The key to success was persistence. Early on, I went to ev-

ery production meeting every day and together we learned what V-CA was all about. Eventually, as other people caught the vision, our knowledge base grew along with the intensity of the group—production, sales, and customer service—as they realized the potential of V-CA. Once that happened, they took it over and have driven it to a level that I never even dreamed was possible.”

Walton adds, “We’re far from where we want to be with V-CA, but we’re so much farther ahead than we were a year ago. We’re just beginning to see how this can help us and assist us in running our business. And we’re excited to find out what else we can make of it.”

### COMMITMENT, PERSISTENCE PAY OFF

Walton recommends that others who are considering a V-CA project only proceed if they’re 100% committed that it’s going to work and that they have the right group to do it. A key to success is having the support and focus in the plant to make it work. He concludes, “V-CA will bring about a culture change that is very positive, but it’s not without pain. Throughout the process you have to stick to it. You can’t waiver.” 