

# MEASURABLE LABOR AND PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENTS HELP GROWER SEE MORE GREEN



A wholesale plant grower and distributor needed to prune its labor expenses and increase the performance of its workforce. POWERS worked from the ground up to establish measures of productivity, set expectations, coach supervisory skills and cultivate leadership. As a result, the company has reaped bottom-line benefits from sustainable labor savings, a higher volume capacity and a nearly 4-to-1 return on its consulting investment.

Our client is a South Carolina-based wholesale grower and distributor of perennial and groundcover plants. It sells some 14 million plants annually to national retail garden centers, such as Lowe's, Home Depot and Walmart, and to other specialty growers and distributors. The company's farm operations require crews of workers to tend to plants throughout the year. However, the wholesale flower business is highly seasonal: The 10-week peak selling season (April 1 to mid-June) accounts for 53 percent of sales. During this time, workers with tractors and trailers are given a pick list with the numbers and types of plants needed each day. Plants are then taken to shipping, assembled by order, placed on carts, directed to the appropriate trucks and dispatched for delivery.

## PROBLEMS

- Unable to sustain required workforce
- No established measurements of productivity
- First-level farm supervisors didn't have access to forecast & historical information
- Lack of leadership & ability to set expectations at production level

## OBJECTIVES

This wholesale plant grower and distributor needed to prune its labor expenses and increase the performance of its workforce. POWERS worked from the ground up to establish measures of productivity, set expectations, coach supervisory skills and cultivate leadership.

## STRATEGY

- Through working with the people in the field and supervisors, POWERS implemented methods to plan a shifts work, the ability to measure the efficacy of that work, and a way to "keep score".
- Built ramp-up plans based on projected loading volumes and a process to cut loading workforce as the season wound down.
- POWERS implemented a process for looking at forecasts and past data to identify patterns.

## RESULTS

- **20% DECREASE** in daily average hours used Feb-Jun
- **65% INCREASE** in units/hour for propagation
- **28% INCREASE** in units/hour for potting
- **18% DECREASE** in assembly inspection and shipping in hours per cart shipped
- **\$1.8 MILLION** in total savings