



A MASS RETAIL POULTRY PROCESSOR BANKED OVER \$6 MILLION IN SAVINGS AND LIFTED SECOND PROCESSING YIELD 6%, TURNING A PLANT THAT MANAGED BY SURVIVAL INTO ONE THAT MANAGED YIELD AND LABOR EVERY HOUR.

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

A brand-new, state-of-the-art plant supplying one of the world's largest mass-market retailers had become a regional powerhouse almost overnight, but massive customer demand quickly outpaced the operational disciplines needed to sustain performance. A young management team, accustomed to managing by survival, chased planned case counts while yield and labor waste went unmeasured and normalized, to the point that whole birds littered the floor around the Deli Line. POWERS installed a robust Management Operating System across every production line and shift, rebuilt Second Processing leadership roles and short-interval routines, and worked through a long list of specific yield and equipment fixes, from thigh-harvester oyster recovery to grading standards and daily trimmer assessments. The result was more than \$6 million in savings over the project, a 6% increase in Second Processing yield, a 45% cut in overtime cost, and a 48% reduction in whole-bird condemned, with \$1.6 million recovered in Dark Meat yield alone.

THE SITUATION

A brand-new state-of-the-art plant became a regional powerhouse in record time, then ran on survival instinct, chasing case counts while yield bled onto the floor.

Massive customer demand landed on a recently completed, state-of-the-art facility just as skilled poultry-processing talent remained difficult to find across the region. Despite its short tenure, the plant had already become one of the region's largest poultry producers. But the same speed that made it a powerhouse left it thin on the experience a chicken plant runs on: top leadership had years behind them, while day-to-day operations leaned on locally hired staff unfamiliar with poultry-processing work.

The young management team had been onboarded during a period of rapid growth and operational strain, and it had learned a single mode of operation: managing by survival under constant production pressure. The whole organization pointed at one number, planned case counts, reported simply as hit or missed. Yield and labor waste were not daily drivers and never had been, so they quietly became normalized. The clearest symptom was visible on the floor, where whole birds could litter the area around the Deli Line without anyone treating it as a problem worth stopping for.

PERFORMANCE RESULTS



THE SITUATION (CONT.)

What leadership needed was not a one-time cleanup or a single equipment fix. The plant had no working system for seeing performance hour to hour, no accountability for shortfalls, and no leadership habits trained to recognize variance and act on it. Hitting demand while recovering the yield and labor it was losing required a Management Operating System that ran the same way on every line and every shift, paired with the leadership development to make that system stick.



THE DIAGNOSIS

Six structural gaps producing the same outcome from six directions.

A team trained only to survive

A young management group had learned to manage by survival, fixated on hitting case counts while yield and labor waste went unmeasured and quietly normalized.

Leaders promoted but never trained to lead

Understanding of high-performance principles was marginal at the manager level and unsatisfactory at the frontline, where leaders had been promoted on task expertise without any formal leadership training.

A whatever-it-takes culture

A do whatever it takes to get cases out the door environment prevailed, one where whole birds could litter the floor and waste went unremarked because nothing competed with case count.

An operating system barely in place

Only 54% of essential MOS elements were present, and 63% of even that was unused, so production areas did not report performance upward and shortfalls carried no accountability.

Performance invisible hour to hour

There were no visual management tools and almost no metrics: case count was the only thing tracked, reported yes or no rather than against a goal, leaving quality, yield, and throughput invisible during the shift.

Issues caught long after they mattered

Frontline supervisors did not reach operators until problems were well past the point of correction, sustaining a victim culture with no performance measures to anchor it.

WHAT POWERS DID

Built a working operating system on every line and put yield and labor under daily management.

POWERS installed a robust Management Operating System across all production lines and shifts, giving the plant the visibility and escalation it had never had. Second Processing area manager roles and responsibilities were rebuilt and aligned to productivity goals, and leadership development, training, and coaching focused on the skills the team was missing: recognizing variance and running root cause analysis. Short-interval regimens were established with frontline managers, supervisors, and team leads, and proactive line-team engagement replaced supervisors who only surfaced after problems had compounded.

On top of that system, a long list of specific yield and equipment fixes ran in parallel. The White Meat breast filet harvester was recalibrated and its configuration locked down, the wing cutter setup was adjusted to reduce breast filet shoulder loss, and rotating blade assemblies were procured and reinstalled to restore thigh-harvester oyster recovery, where roughly 80% of oysters had been lost. Grading standards were retrained with visual aids, daily White Meat trimmer assessments were developed, and a wing grading SOP with hourly audits was put in place. Metal-detector management got its own SOPs, marinade was recovered with drip pans and tighter end-of-production discipline, and a thinner-cover design change went onto the SaddlePack line.

The same discipline reached labor and flow. Personnel start times were adjusted so staffing aligned with line-product timing, the Deli line was rebalanced through line-balancing analysis and reconfigured staffing, and labor was reallocated in the Bag Puller function. Taken together, these moves turned case count from the plant's only signal into one of many managed numbers, and the cumulative effect showed up across yield, labor, overtime, and waste at once.

THE FULL RESULT

Six measurable gains, every one earned by managing yield and labor daily rather than firefighting.

\$6M Total Savings

More than \$6 million in savings over the project as yield, labor, overtime, and waste came under daily management for the first time.

6% Second-Processing Yield Increase

Visual management, daily trimmer assessments, retrained grading standards, and equipment fixes turned yield into a managed number rather than an afterthought.

45% Overtime Cost Reduction

Short-interval management and a working operating system replaced firefighting and survival-mode staffing, pulling overtime cost down sharply.

48% Whole-Bird Condemned Reduction

Awareness of leak points and tighter line discipline cut whole-bird condemned nearly in half.

\$1.6M Dark Meat Yield Recovery

Restoring thigh-harvester oyster recovery, after roughly 80% had been lost, drove Dark Meat yield improvements worth \$1.6 million on their own.

2% Regular Labor Cost Reduction

Line balancing and start-time alignment matched staffing to the actual work, trimming regular labor cost.