

# STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

## Business, Education and Regional

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**“Connecting knowledge and the real world.”**

### Lean Training: Helping Companies Help Themselves

Lean training helps companies identify areas of production and transactional operations that add value for the customer versus areas that produce waste (wasted time, steps, paperwork). Implementing a new system designed to increase productivity and “trim the right waste” from a company’s processes increase efficiency, market competitiveness and add to the bottom line to help keep more jobs in the region.

The Manufacturing Engineering Technology program at Minnesota State implements concepts of Lean manufacturing in their curriculum, as students will graduate and enter career fields in which Lean is an industry standard.

Minnesota State’s Ann Goebel began leading Lean training events to industry before coming to the University. Now Goebel’s expertise is a valuable tool in Minnesota State’s toolbox as her affiliation with Strategic Partnerships has added value for our partners.

#### Don Alter - Chandler Industries, Montevideo, MN



Lean came to Chandler several years ago through a customer who used the technology with its suppliers. Recognizing its benefit, the company contacted Ann Goebel to conduct Lean events to improve processes company-wide.

The paperwork process of bringing work orders from the customers to the floor took as many as 10 days prior to Lean training. Lean reduced that time to four days, and upon implementation of paperless processing, to under 24 hours.

Chandler’s process sheets, tool sheets and blueprints are now entirely paperless.

According to company Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Don Alter, “Our average lead time for our biggest customers has gone from three to four weeks down to three to four days. It has made us more competitive.” Chandler has also introduced Lean systems to its suppliers, cutting inventories by 75 to 80 percent.

The Lean training programs the company began with Goebel continue to this day. Each new employee is trained with a Lean manufacturing orientation package. Additionally, Alter stated, “Everybody from people on the manufacturing floor to the President of our company has led Lean events. It has been infused into every facet of the company.”



Ann Goebel

Director of Twin Cities Partnerships

Minnesota State University, Mankato



Chandler Industries

Contract manufacturer of precision machine components

Est. 1961

2008 Supplier of the Year

## Joe Paulsen - TBEI (Truck Bodies & Equipment International) Inc., Lake Crystal, MN



A few years back, Ann Goebel worked with TBEI, bringing Lean training to the company. At that time, when TBEI purchased the former Crysteel Manufacturing, most of the management team had never experienced Lean—they were not all on the same page.

Goebel was the only one who provided theoretical and applied training—explaining *why* things were to be implemented versus simply explaining *what* to do. Some of Goebel's materials are still used today. Incoming employees are expected to have at least a basic knowledge of Lean.

When the initial training concluded, the team planned and conducted eight *kaizen* (Japanese for "change for the better") events and the whole plant suddenly felt the effect of the training as it was put to practical use. Employees were pulled from the shop floor or offices for approximately one week at a time to go through intensively focused training, then went back to their jobs to implement the tools learned for continuous improvement.

The company now can shift faster to meet customer needs. General Manager, Joe Paulsen, explains "I think Lean may be the reason we're here today. It has improved our quality and productivity and has allowed us to do things that we wouldn't have dreamt of five years ago."

## Meet the Advisory Team



"We need to tell students, 'You are graduating with a quality degree and you are marketable.'"

Christopher Frederick, Minnesota State Colleges & Universities Board Trustee

### How do you describe your role within Strategic Partnerships?

When I was student body president on campus, my role was to give a perspective—that was the perspective of a student and how a student can benefit from the division's work. My role has continued as such, through being president of the campus, then being chair of the statewide student association, and now being a trustee—representing the student constituent base.

### How would you evaluate this division's value and impact?

I think it has huge value. It has more value than we give it credit for, because I see the role of what the division is doing as bringing in the integral piece of "after college." As a student, we're sitting in a classroom, learning all these things, gaining all these skills, and it's those business partnerships that take the raw material and define how a student's going to function in the real world.

So the partnership is extremely vital for education, and we need to continue to foster, grow, and develop these relationships with business and education. Because at the end of the day, we need to get students prepared and ready for life after college. That's why these partnerships are so vital to a college's



TBEI Inc.

Leading manufacturer of dump truck bodies, hoists and truck/trailer equipment

Minnesota based, privately owned corporation

1,000 plus distributors and dealers across North America



Minnesota  
STATE COLLEGES  
& UNIVERSITIES

success, especially in today's age.

**What value do you see that Strategic Partnerships has for the University, for Southern Minnesota, and for the State?**

It gets the name of the institution out there, raising the level of visibility for both the region and the University. The way it does that is through networking and relationships. Word spreads pretty fast if we're producing quality students, educating students to a higher standard, a higher level. They're more ready for the real world. Business is going to see that and they're going to want to jump on it.

There are a lot of resources that the University can provide to a business, through development, or more partner relationships with faculty, staff, or resources. We are on the cutting edge and we're a front-runner in development.

**How do you see this Division's role in the future?**

Well, if we can get the committee back, or if we can try to somehow steer Bob back into more of the partnership, as opposed to the extended learning, I think there's monumental strides that can be taken to continue honing in on what those relationships need to be.

As a student, I personally would like to see the department get more business and raise the level of visibility on campus, so as a student graduating, you know that you're gaining hands-on skills and you're marketable. Right now, what we're lacking is marketing. We're getting business and we're starting to bring those relationships in. We need to grab those relationships, build them, and market them to students. We need to tell students, "You are graduating with a quality degree and you are marketable."



**"We should be looking at how this University can be a real heavy-hitter in all ways, not just teaching and learning."**

**Stewart Ross, Director of Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning  
Minnesota State University, Mankato**

**How do you describe your role within Strategic Partnerships?**

I've been the Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning for the eight years that we've had the Center. I have a pretty good understanding of our faculty after all these years working with them. Business people don't completely understand faculty culture, and faculty members don't always understand business culture, unless they come from business. I try to provide that link when I can.

People might be asking, "How can we get faculty more interested in that type of thing?" That's where we would have a discussion about whether we have a workshop or invite certain faculty. Whenever I hear 'faculty' I try to help out by explaining how I think things might work out the best.

**How would you evaluate this division's value and impact?**

Well, to be honest, I was a tad skeptical when that office was started. But I think if we want to improve our situation here in the region, we should be looking at how this University can be a real heavy-hitter in all ways, not just teaching and learning. So, I'm very interested in how faculty can work with businesses. I do see the need and the importance that this type of office can bring to the institution.



Bob Hoffman and I have had a very good working relationship since the day he walked in the door. He's also taken on some other work with Extended Learning. I've been more involved with him on that because of what we do in our Center—helping faculty teach better and students learn better.

**What value do you see that Strategic Partnerships has for the University, for Southern Minnesota, and for the State?**

We are a comprehensive University, so a lot of different areas fit into our goals and mission. So I have seen a lot of really good things coming out of this division that have involved faculty specifically, and it is an important outreach to keep working on, along with our international studies which has been growing.

We know that our faculty can help businesses, and businesses can help our faculty and students. The synergy that results is going to be a good thing. Clearly, there are some real-world opportunities for our University through our work with Strategic Partnerships.



**Jonathan Zierdt, President & CEO of Greater Mankato Growth, Inc.**

**“Economic development is buried within the DNA of Strategic Partnerships.”**



**Greater Mankato Growth, Inc.**

**A little Twin Cities. A lot Minnesota!**

**How do you describe your role within Strategic Partnerships?**

My job is to help provide insight into what the business community is thinking, what would be helpful for them to grow, to be vibrant as businesses, and to help them move to another level. My role is to convey what businesses are experiencing, or considering, and to express their desires and urgencies for an institution like Minnesota State University, Mankato that's loaded with assets and resources. I relay the business community's desire to be in a relationship with the University and its resources.

**How would you evaluate this division's value and impact?**

Having a dedicated portion of our University that is the hub, the clearing house, the central energy to interface with business, makes a University-wide priority and creates a pathway or gateway for a system and focus.

Strategic Partnerships has done a good job of slowly establishing and building a culture. Wherever it was yesterday, it's better today. Wherever it will be tomorrow will be better than today. It's like planting a sapling—it's not going to turn into a tree that you can have a picnic under for years. Strategic Partnerships is a little like that, and you need proof points along the way.

There have been victories already. John Rivisto at Wells Concrete said, "We're limited because we can only put so much on a truck and we can only haul so far. If we could figure out a way to make a concrete that was as strong or stronger and half the weight, we could put twice as many panels on a truck or haul it twice as far." They didn't have the R&D for it, but they wanted to invest in it. So we said, "Wells wants to put money into concrete research. They've got a practical application, the factory where we can test—real life—we can do all this." That's how the job got done. We put that into real life, and brought it to the commercialization market.

Our faculty members have a lot to offer, so the job here is to try to match the

talent of our University community with the opportunities that the business community has at its forefront. Put those together and we can generate economic impact.

**What value do you see that Strategic Partnerships has for the University, for Southern Minnesota, and for the State?**

It's economic development. Our angle at Greater Mankato Growth is: how do we make businesses stronger and more vibrant? We want to help businesses start, grow, become viable, become meaningful. We want to create opportunities for our businesses—employment, wealth, entrepreneurial opportunities. Economic development is buried within the DNA of Strategic Partnerships.

From a state, regional and community perspective, economic development is going to benefit all of us. Minnesota State Mankato is a regional institution. This is a major engine for the State of Minnesota, in terms of talent generation and economic impact. The University can be an integral part of economic development when we leverage and optimize the strengths and assets it has.

**How do you see this Division's role in the future?**

It's critical. The University is 15,000 people—that's bigger than a lot of cities in the state. So, it's a little community of its own. But we want the campus and university experience to be the entire community, not just that plot of land there.

We've got to keep building that connection and get more and more integrated as a community to allow our businesses and our University to have that experimental area, that test area, that growth area, that learning area and be someplace where the two of them meet.

When you add us together, you get a comprehensive portfolio. When we go about it alone, we're not as good. The relationship is just critical, so that this community is a destination—a place people want to make their home.

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