

Work-Sharing program puts the flexibility of steel to the test

By Jodi Baker, Manager of Workforce Development and Human Resource Advisor, Standen's Limited

As any organization who applies to the government's Works-Sharing program and is approved can attest, the primary goal is to keep an existing talented work force working. Standen's Limited, a Calgary-based manufacturer, began its Work-Sharing program in March of 2009.

The program has afforded the Standen's team opportunities that may not have been a primary focus otherwise, shifting a dedicated focus to workforce development. An extra four to eight hours a week has propelled leadership training, essential skills training and some extra time put towards the biggest task any manufacturer faces — a flexible work force. Cross-training not only enhances the capability of an organization, it challenges each employee to stretch beyond what they believed their capabilities were, allowing them to gain new skills and contribute on a whole new level.

Work-Sharing has seen Standen's employee base take on internal LEAN Manufacturing process improvement initiatives, such as implementing a comprehensive 6S program geared at improving safety and aesthetics of the production area.

There have been hurdles to jump as the company enters its 8th month of Work-Sharing. Managing the administrative duties to ensure employees receive their E.I. payments in a timely manner is challenging with the increased demand in today's economic climate. Standen's has found both the Work-Sharing and E.I departments of HRSDC very responsive in assisting us to manage any challenges faced while participating in the program.

As the economy moves into some type of stabilization and we begin to see a shift towards greater gains, Standen's will have met its commitment to employee development and retention and will emerge from the program with a higher skilled workforce, a renewed passion for what we do and continue to be a fixture in this city for generations to come.