

Recharging an American Classic: Sweet Manufacturing

Munro
&
Associates, Inc.



Necco Wafers®, Clark® Bar, Sweethearts®, Mary Jane®, Mighty Malts® Malted Milk Balls, Haviland® Thin Mints, and Candy House® Candy Buttons®; Wow, what a blast from the past! These great American classics conjure images of hot summer days, worn out cut-offs and endless free time. They are a tribute to the American spirit and the hard work that made this Nation great. Thanks to The New England Confectionery Company (NECCO), these cherished candies are 100% all natural and still available for enjoyment today.



Dating back to the summer of 1847, Necco is the oldest multi-line candy company in the United States. 162 years later, in late 2009, Necco had the type of problem that most companies hope for: their sales team had done too good of a job selling. They weren't sure how to make and package all the candy they needed for the upcoming Valentines season. Necco would have to nearly double their throughput on old equipment and do so in less than 4 months.

Through mutual relations Munro & Associates was introduced to Necco and the journey began. With a short window to show our worth, Munro poured in with a no-holds barred attitude and became an integral part of the team that made the season a success. First order of business: quickly eliminate rolling shut downs being caused by material shortages and boost capacity in existing systems. Munro is different from most other consulting companies; we put feet on the floor and got to work. Armed with 22 years of lean manufacturing experience, Munro applied 5S principles and sound machine engineering to make the plant hum. We sought out the veterans in the plant to jointly identify where excess capacity was hiding and immediately brought it to bear. We sourced, managed, and validated the installation of a new production line in five weeks. We helped manage the successful launch of a third shift, and even served as emergency production supervisors in a pinch.



That was just the candy making department. In the candy packaging department our Munro team identified throughput issues and, more importantly, led the changes that boosted production. Our engineers fixed equipment that "had never worked properly before." We directed suppliers to quickly make changes to new equipment installations and brought it online properly with a 50% reduction in projected manpower. Again and again, Munro drove rapid change and improvements bringing statistical methods to bear

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where it made sense. Engineering and production management counted on us to make decisions in their place.

At the end of the season, Necco had record days in production, and had doubled their original production numbers. Munro's biggest contributions were quickly recognizing and bolstering our customer's capabilities, and supplying our strengths and experience to take them to the next level. In short – we made sure that the job got done.

After the Fact....Another Challenge

When all was said and done, and the season saved, a new challenge presented itself; a new production launch. A critical new candy bar was scheduled for launch at full capacity in 4 weeks time. The bad news: there was 8 weeks of work to get the new line prepped and production ready. New equipment needed to be installed and old equipment needed to be moved. There had been significant scrap issues when the line had run previously, and candy consistency was a big issue. Munro was again asked to lead the effort and launch on time. We introduced our Wall Process® in a new environment and experienced the same level of success as in other industries. We launched on time, on budget, and reached the required production rate within 2 days. Scrap was reduced by half.



It was truly a team effort, and Munro provided the syrup that brought it all together. We made sure that engineering was listening to manufacturing at a deeper level than had happened before, and kept the marketing and sales folks aware of what we were doing to enhance the quality and production of the product. Since the candy that we were launching was almost completely handmade, we made sure that we found out what the operators needed to work effectively. With our compressed timing we had to make choices on what equipment upgrades we would and would not make. Munro provided the guidance to our customer on where focus was needed, and then made sure the whole organization bought into the plan.

Were we successful? After the Munro office received the second case of the new candy bars from the delighted sales manager, we decided the answer was “Yes.”

Necco's motto is “Get Real” because all their candy is 100% natural. If your company needs a little help, maybe you should “Get Real” help and talk to Munro.

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