



Ron Lyrek, Interscapes, Inc., Minneapolis

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG BARES

## Lean, the Second Go-Round

While on vacation last year, Ron Lyrek decided to catch up on his reading. Not one for a light read, Lyrek worked his way through “Lean Solutions” by James P. Womack. By the time he finished it, Lyrek realized he needed to make some changes in his company, Interscapes, Inc. A Minneapolis-based manufacturing company that specializes in architectural woodworking for corporate and medical office areas, among other things, Interscapes had been through lean once. It was unable to follow through on lean, and Lyrek was struggling to implement lean solutions with the little time he had.

Impressed by the products and services Minnesota Technology, Inc. (MTI) had to offer, and pleased with the ability to secure Growth Acceleration Program money—which would allow him to make his company more efficient—Lyrek decided to go with MTI to lay out a strategic planning initiative and to go through lean office and lean production again. “I was convinced we could become a much better company, a much [more efficient] company, a much more profitable company and a much more competitive company by going through our whole facility again,” recalls Lyrek.

In addition to lean, Lyrek hopes to reconfigure his plant layout since they will be moving to an undetermined location within a 10-mile radius north of Minneapolis. Since his company has been through lean before, Lyrek is at an advantage when it comes to buying a new building. He knows, when lean is implemented, that Interscapes can produce more in less space. “Our sales per square foot are 2.2 times the average cabinet shop in America because of lean. Instead of looking for 50,000-square-foot shop, I’m looking for 20,000 to 30,000 square feet. We can do \$4 million in the same space we [once] did \$1.5 million.”

When MTI first did a business analysis of Interscapes to determine what needed to be done, it suggested the company update its Internet technology, including its Web site. Lyrek also decided to initiate a green policy within the company, to reflect better stewardship of Interscapes’s resources. While Lyrek looks forward to completing the entire process within the year and experiencing a boost in revenue as a result of lean, he mostly looks forward to a reduced stress level as a result of the completed changes. That, and perhaps a vacation without such heavy reading. —N.R.