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MSC Inventory Program Helps Clean Air Solutions Provider Filter Out Costs



Gerardo Toro, Maintenance Group Leader.

"For more than 90 years, AAF International has been in the business of protecting people, processes, equipment and the environment with its extensive line of air filtration products," said a company spokesperson. "The company's commitment to better air, along with a tenacious business strategy and strong vendor support from companies such as MSC Industrial Supply, has made it a leader in its respective industry. The company operates in 22 countries and employs more than 2,600 people."

Among the current AAF locations is a manufacturing facility in Elizabethtown, PA, where the company produces approximately 8 million commercial air filters per year, with a product mix of seven different filter types, including pleated, fiberglass and bag. Here, as in every manufacturing environment, safety is important. AAF is committed to protecting the health of its employees and customers, the company said.

However, until recently, AAF International had been plagued by "out-of-control" practices when it came to dispensing personal protective equipment (PPE), such as safety glasses, inspection gloves, cut-resistant gloves, lifting gloves, earplugs, aprons and dust masks.

The company used the "locked cabinet" dispensing approach where only supervisors and human resources staff had access to the equipment and employees were responsible for tracking them down. Such a process ended up becoming extremely time-consuming, and it reached the point where supervisors were unlocking the cabinet as much as five times a day. This resulted in the loss of productivity for both them and their employees. In fact, shop workers were losing approximately 10 minutes per transaction. Plus, waste sometimes occurred because employees would "hoard" equipment that would ultimately become lost or accidentally discarded.

When it became time to make a change,

AAF International looked to MSC to recommend a smarter vending solution that met the unique needs of the Elizabethtown operations. After conducting a comprehensive industrial vending assessment, MSC recommended a customized vending solution consisting of an automated dispensing unit paired with an inventory management program that would effectively streamline AAF's facility procurement and dispensing processes, in order to save them significant time and money.

Since implementing MSC's vending solutions into its Elizabethtown facility, AAF has reduced excess inventory, increased productivity, controlled item issuance, decreased material consumption and improved spend tracking.

According to Jennifer Johanning, a production clerk at AAF International who manages the personal safety equipment, MSC's vending solutions have saved supervisors 3.5 hours/week by reducing the time they spend issuing PPE products. Furthermore, during the first year of installation, glove consumption has been reduced 73% by implementing dispensing controls and usage tracking, the company said.

Like Johanning, shop workers also find MSC's vending solutions user-friendly. The easy-to-use touch screen interface and card swipe takes them approximately 30 seconds to log in and obtain their protection equipment. "Workers enjoy the 24/7 accessibility because they never have to track down a supervisor again to stay safe," she said.

In addition, the facility has improved its usage of OSHA required personal protective equipment by having it readily available to employees in a common area. For example, the unit is capable of dispensing five sets of



Ryan Nguyen, Group Leader - Perfect Pleat.

earplugs at a time, allowing employees to have a fresh pair for every day of the work week.

"It's a win-win situation for all those involved. Supervisors are no longer interrupted throughout the day, and employees don't have to feel like they are bugging anyone. By installing MSC's vending solutions in our lunchroom, employees have convenient and quick access to the equipment that keeps them safe while doing their job."

Johanning also said that MSC's vending solutions have increased her productivity by an estimated 2 hours per week because of an automated reordering process that allows her to do everything online, eliminating the manual evaluation of inventory for replenishment.

"Because we never had official inventory tracking reports before, it was difficult for me to assess what personal protection equipment got used the most-and the least," she said. "But now, I am proud to say I've got my ordering rotation down pat, and MSC always lets me know if I'm running low on something."

Overall, because AAF International's Elizabethtown manufacturing facility has found such success with MSC's vending solutions, the company is currently looking at implementing similar programs at its other facilities, with Dallas, TX, being the first on deck. "I would recommend MSC to any manufacturer looking to take the hassle out of their inventory program," said Johanning.

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MSC Customized Vending Solution featuring an automated dispensing unit paired with an inventory management program.