



NCAfE: Keihin Continues Corporate Excellence

Tarboro Facility Promotes Quality at All Levels of the Company

The corporate goal is spelled out clearly at engine control unit manufacturer, Keihin Carolina System Technology: to contribute to the future of mankind by constantly creating new value.

Keihin's Tarboro facility takes that mission seriously and never stops striving for excellence.

"We were meeting or exceeding our internal corporate benchmarks, so the next logical question was, 'What's next?' How do we get to that next level to make our performance even better, increase our profitability, and make sure our workforce is engaged in what we're doing?" says Keith Jordan, senior manager of plant operations.

Keihin considered pursuing excellence awards like the Shingo Prize or the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, but then discovered the North Carolina Award for Excellence (NCAfE).

Administered by NC State University Industry Expansion Solutions (IES), the NCAfE award is based on the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and embraces the same goals of quality management, leadership, innovation, customer focus and business excellence. For participants who must meet rigorous criteria in order to receive the award, it offers both challenges and opportunities for growth.

Rising to the Challenge

In late 2011, an IES improvement specialist began NCAfE Level 1 training at Keihin. The process was smooth, according to Jordan, and posed the normal challenges of trying to implement a rigorous program facility-wide while still maintaining a production schedule.

Keihin Carolina System Technology Challenge

Keihin Carolina System Technology wanted to strengthen its performance excellence program and more deeply engage its workforce

IES Solution

North Carolina Award for Excellence (NCAfE)

Benefits

The company gained a top-level view of its strengths and opportunities for improvement, and was able to prioritize where its improvement efforts should be focused

Keihin quickly achieved the first of four levels. Level 1 is an assessment and planning stage that analyzes a company's strengths and opportunities for improvement using the Baldrige criteria as a framework for excellence. By early 2012, Keihin had moved on to Level 2.

Continuing to work with IES at this intermediate level, Keihin continued its journey toward excellence by receiving a detailed assessment of its strengths, helping the company prioritize its next improvement efforts. By early 2013 the company was on track to complete Level 3.

Focus on the Future

Jordan was very pleased with the efforts and looks forward to continuing the journey, bringing more of the Keihin team on board.

"As we're moving to the third level, we're increasing the engagement of not just management but also the associates," he says. "That's one of the biggest things I hope to get more of—making sure every single person internally is engaged in what we're doing."

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—Keith Jordan, Senior Manager of Plant Operations, Keihin

Jordan is confident that every associate will work together to move the company forward successfully, keeping the NCAfE standards in mind.

"We're working on pieces to make sure we have standardized feedback—to give us more dynamic conversations among everyone here," he says. "We want to be sure we're all moving strongly in the same direction."

For Keihin, NCAfE has offered a new way to give focus to the corporate philosophy of excellence—for associates, customers, suppliers, shareholders and the community—while fulfilling its mission of creating value for all.

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