



e-LEAN update

Zero Defects

Several years ago, a local newspaper conducted an intensive review of billings submitted to a Minnesota state agency for payment. After reviewing and evaluating 4 million records, the paper discovered 585 instances of overbillings paid by this agency.

The front page, above the fold, banner headline was 'Investigation uncovers 585 overpayments made by State'. The article then detailed an interview with the leader of the organization, who was asked questions like 'how this could happen, who is responsible, what actions will be taken to insure this never happens again, etc'.

For those of us who work in the public sector, this is a predictable and seemingly unavoidable example of life in a fish bowl. And our typical response: an often apologetic promise to look into it, try harder, make improvements, which usually allows the story to fade, until the next time something goes wrong.

But, as Albert Einstein is quoted as saying "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, and expecting different results."

So maybe we need to change our response. How about:

Newspaper: "How could this happen?"

Agency: "Based on your review, we have an accuracy rate of 99.996%. I challenge other organizations, including yours, to match that. This happens because we have a dedicated, conscientious workforce who cares about doing a good job."

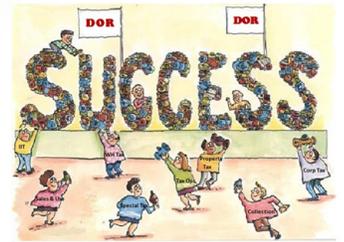
Newspaper: "Yes, but what about the errors, what are you going to do about that?"

Agency: "We are always looking for ways to improve, and reduce errors. So we will continue to examine our processes for additional opportunities to improve. However, humans are not perfect and zero defect is not about perfection. It's about a culture where employees understand that processes must constantly be improved, and that flawed or defective systems must be reworked."

"However, defects vary in size, severity and cost. And we should not spend \$20 to save a \$1. That is bad business and an irresponsible use of the peoples' money."

Hmm. I wonder what Albert would say to that?

An Invitation To Celebrate Our



Return Mail Project Team

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Are you lean?

Nearly 4,500 people have participated in Lean activities — how about you? Visit www.lean.state.mn.us to get involved in Lean efforts in your agency!

Minnesota Department of Education reduces food program review time by 50 percent



The Department of Education hosted a Kaizen event March 19 to 22 to streamline the review process for the School Nutrition Program and Child and Adult Care Food Program.

The goals of the event were to reduce process steps by 20 percent, task time by 25 percent, and paperwork by 50 percent. The Kaizen Team observed that the current process had highly variable wait and task times, required too many forms, and involved steps that did not add value for the customer.

The team developed a new process that will reduce process steps by more than 60 percent, reduce task time by about half, and save up to 4,000 staff hours. They also plan to reduce the amount spent on postage by 90 percent.

With support from agency leadership, collaboration with other work units, and time to complete their action plan, the team plans to have the new process in place by November 2012.

The Minnesota Department of Education serves approximately 850,000 K-12 students and their families; 118,000 young children in early learning programs; 82,000 adult learners; Minnesota's 339 school districts and over 52,000 licensed teachers.

Upcoming Events

Visit Lean Online (www.lean.state.mn.us) for current Lean trainings and events:

Apr. 13, Metropolitan State University Lean 101

Apr. 19-20, Kaizen Facilitator Training, Registration FULL

Apr. 24-27, DLI Kaizen Event

Apr. 26, MPCA Lean 101

May 1, Lean 101, Registration FULL

May 2-3, Kaizen Facilitator Training, Registration FULL

May 4, AMSSA Lean Overview

May 21, Mille Lacs County Lean 101

May 21-24, MnDOT Kaizen Event

June 12, Lean 101, Registration FULL

June 18-19, Kaizen Facilitator Training, Registration FULL