



*Dept. of Revenue streamlines returned mail process, p. 2*

# e-LEAN update

## Who is the customer?

Ask a group of public sector employees who their customers are and you will likely get a wide variety of answers.

Some may say with unwavering certainty, “the citizens of our state, county or city.” Others may say with equal passion and conviction, “the state legislature, county board, or city council.” Still others may say, “those who most directly benefit from the product or service we are creating.” Really confusing.

### Case in point

During a recent kaizen event related to the issuance of water appropriation permits, the team had a lively debate over this question of customer. A few felt it was clearly the individual or business that needed to pump large quantities of ground or surface water to support a business need (think farmers and irrigation of farm fields). Others felt that, since this program was ultimately intended to protect the sustainability of our water resources, the citizens of our state were their customers.

So if you believe the citizens are customers, you could say, “Err on the side of caution and don’t issue permits.” If you support the idea that the person or business requesting the permit is the customer, you could easily say, “Always issue permits, because the customer is always right.”

However, it is an integrated relationship between these two entities that ultimately affect the creation of key customer requirements.

In this case, the interest of citizens requires that the state agency understand and strike a fair balance between the long term sustainability of the resource and the legitimate needs of today’s society.

But ultimately, the direct customer of this process is the farmer requesting a permit.

And as we attempt to meet their key customer requirements, we should review and issue permits quickly, fairly and consistently. And when, because of long term resource concerns, we must say, “No,” we should again do it in a timely, transparent, and consistent manner.

To steal a timely football analogy, while the citizens may chalk the field, and through their elected officials determine the rules of game, we must figure out the best way to move the ball up and down the field.

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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](http://www.lean.state.mn.us) to get involved in Lean efforts in your agency!

## Minnesota Department of Revenue celebrates improved returned mail process

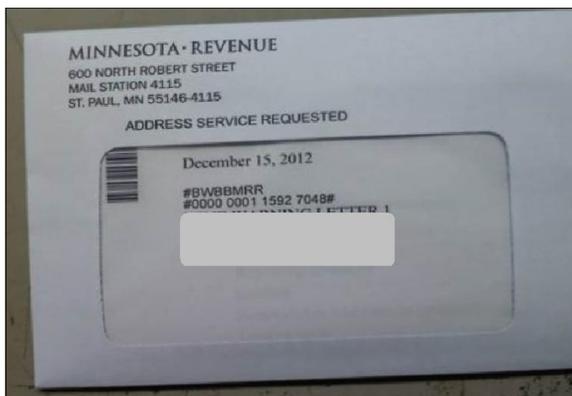
In April, the Department of Revenue celebrated a year of continuous improvement. The department's first ever Kaizen event was held February 28 to March 3, 2011, to streamline returned mail processes handled by eight different departmental units.



*Boxes of various envelopes used in the old process*

The key outcome the event was the development of a department-wide process that is managed by a centralized unit.

As part of that improvement, a centralized printing function was developed, as was a locate and return mail function. This allows for use of standardized envelopes, and inserts, instead of customized, and sometimes confusing mailings going out of the office.



*Standardizing envelopes reduced costs and storage in the new process*

The Minnesota Department of Revenue manages the state's revenue system and administers 28 different taxes, collecting over \$12 billion annually.

### Upcoming Events

Visit Lean Online

([www.lean.state.mn.us](http://www.lean.state.mn.us)) for Lean training and other events:

**May 16**, Mille Lacs Cty. Lean 101

**May 21-24**, MnDOT Kaizen Event

**May 30**, Hennepin Cty. Lean 101

**May 31**, MACSSA Lean Presentation

**June 5-7**, DOLI Kaizen Event

**June 11-14**, Dept. of Revenue Kaizen Event

**June 12**, Lean 101, Registration FULL

**June 18-19**, Kaizen Facilitator Training, Registration FULL

**June 25-28**, Dept. of Health Kaizen Event

**July 10**, Lean 101, Registration FULL

**July 11-12**, Kaizen Facilitator Training, **Registration OPEN**