



April 2013

Expanding the Lean Toolbox – What Tools Should You Use?

When it comes to continuous improvement (CI), Lean principles offer us a basic toolset, a methodology through which to think about and work toward improving our operations. Every organization approaches CI in a unique way however, and there are many toolsets, methodologies and principles out there. Whether it's Lean, Six Sigma, Total Quality Management, or something different, how do you know what tools are right for you?

In recent months, a number of employees from the state have been invited to attend introductory CI training at General Mills. This has offered us an opportunity to ponder this question, and look at how another leading organization is tackling CI.

Much of the General Mills approach is kindred to the one seen here at the State of Minnesota. Its program is built on the principles of "Learn – Do – Teach" and "Total Employee Involvement," which very much reflect what we build around in our effort. Conversely, the tools used at General Mills are different and more numerous.

While the state has primarily been training employees in the basics of the 7 Wastes, 5S, Standard Work, and Kaizen events, General Mills has a collection of tools that they use in various different business processes and situations. Below are just a few examples:

- **Why, Why:** Perhaps you've heard of the "Five Why's," which compel people to ask "why" five times when it comes to assessing the status quo or a current problem. Much like that, Why, Why is a tool used for root cause analysis. It helps a team or individual get to the source of reoccurring problems by asking a series of targeted questions (hint: they all start with "Why...").
- **Fishbone Diagram:** Another method for identifying and visualizing the causes of a particular problem; it is named for its structure, which resembles the skeleton of a fish.

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Lean 101 Refresher

Kaizen is a Japanese term that translates to "improvement" or "change for the better."

- **DMAIC:** Pronounced by many as “Duh-May-Ick,” this stands for Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control. It is at the heart of Six Sigma, and is used for assessing and solving complex problems by identifying and removing defects.
- **Value Stream Mapping:** Here at the state, we use swim lane mapping in our kaizen events, but there are many different ways to map a business process. Our swim lane mapping focuses on functions and their steps. Value Stream Mapping also lays out the steps, but then focuses on identifying and tagging those steps based on their value and their necessity.

Are you familiar with these tools or others? Which ones do you use in your daily efforts to improve operations and processes? We encourage you to explore and research other tools as you pursue CI in your workplace. Let us know what’s working for you and if there are tools you would you like to see the state implement within its Lean program!

University of Minnesota Holds Kaizen Event on Hiring Processes

For any great organization, attracting and hiring talented people is an essential function. At the University of Minnesota, inefficient and cumbersome processes were hindering Human Resource staff’s ability to perform that function effectively.

In order to tackle this issue and redesign their hiring processes, HR staff from units across the University held a Kaizen event April 1 through 4.

Varied processes across different campuses and employee groups, unclear and inconsistent standards, and a lack of communication were creating frustration for employees and applicants. As a result, the time taken to get positions filled was long and information gaps, defects and rework within the hiring process were common.

The team outlined a number of recommendations to redesign the process and address these problems. The team plans to standardize the hiring procedures across campuses, units and employee groups, clarify roles and responsibilities, reduce process steps, and establish clear timelines and expectations. The team is also pursuing improvements to their forms and instructions, with increased automation that will benefit University employees and applicants. These are just a couple of many recommendations and action plan items the team will work toward in the days ahead.

Upcoming Events

April 22-25, Dept. of Commerce Kaizen Event

April 29, Sibley County Lean 101

April 30-May 2, Assoc. of MN Counties Train the Trainer

May 13, Lean 101, Full

May 14-15, Kaizen Facilitator Training, Full

May 17, Hennepin County Lean 101

May 20-24, Dept. of Commerce Kaizen Event

June 6, Lean 101, Full

June 25, Lean 101, Open

June 27, MN Management and Budget Lean 101

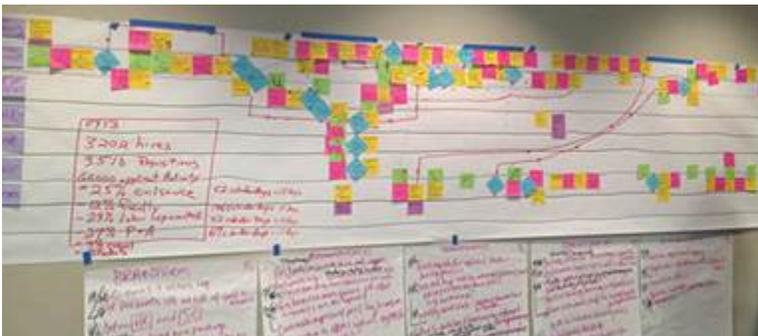
View all Lean events at www.lean.state.mn.us/calendar

Register for trainings on our mnlean.eventbrite.com.



The University of Minnesota Hiring Redesign Kaizen Team.

The team expects these changes to cut by about half the number of process steps and staff work time going into each hiring. Further, positions would be filled anywhere from 40 to 65 percent faster depending on the class of position.



The Current Process Swim Lane Map, where the variability and complexity of the existing process is on display.

As the University strives to attract, hire and retain the highest quality candidates, these changes should have a big impact.
