



# E-LEAN update

November 2009

## Lean and mean?

Seconds before beginning a presentation on Lean in state government, a late arrival rushed in and asked, "Is this the 'Lean and Mean' session?"

Without time to couch a response with a retort or context, the facilitator simply said, "Yes," and then felt guilty. Here is why.

In the world of sports, the phrase 'lean and mean' conjures up images of one who is physically skilled, ready for action and armed with a 'take no prisoners' attitude. On the basketball court or hockey rink, players want to be surrounded by a teammates who are "lean and mean."

There are lean and mean players on the field, but what about on the job?

Of course, 'Lean' is simply a term that James

Womack, in his book *Lean Thinking*, applies to a set of continuous process improvement tools, methods and philosophies as exemplified by the Toyota Motor Company.

Yet some may view Lean and mean as two variables in the same equation. If you want to be more Lean, more employees will be affected (i.e. lose their job) and that is mean. However, Lean *is not* about being mean; in fact, Lean is about better results for your customers and better work for the employee.

This is not to say that jobs will not change by applying Lean thinking to state business processes. If we did not change the way we do the work, then there would be no improvement and no reason to have a continuous process improvement program.

*"Lean and mean" continued on page 2*

### Metro State improves class scheduling process

Scheduling classes at the Metro State University locations is no easy task. With nearly 10 different stakeholder groups, the tangle of process inputs is daunting.

Prior to the Kaizen event, the schedule was continuously revised and involved rework loops, long wait times and frustration.

The team redesigned the scheduling process to include: proactive gathering of information to understand individual department needs, separate registration processes for fall and spring semesters, new deadlines for course schedule submissions, standard work and a communications plan. The team will



#### Academic scheduling Kaizen team

Front row: Barbara Yonekawa, Brenda Wood and Natalie Bearth; back row: Joyce Paxton, Dawn Syverson, Laurie Barr, Jean Alaspa, Mary Maas, Lori Page and Lorri Skwira.

realize a 61 percent improvement in process time once all of the improvements are in place.

## Lean and mean? *(continued from the front page)*

Changing work means changing elements of peoples' jobs. Through more than 105 process improvement events, it is clear that the mundane redundant, frustrating, and ambiguous tasks that make jobs less fulfilling and efforts less productive can be—and are—identified as wastes ripe for elimination.

By leaning out processes, outputs are produced

more quickly with higher quality and less re-work. This results in fewer customer complaints and greater job satisfaction.

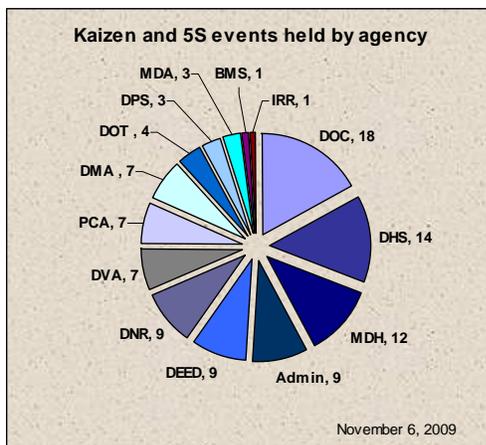
By being Lean, we free up time to address higher value work. Or as Steven Covey portrays in his book *First Things First*, we now have more time to work on the 'important' instead of only working on the 'urgent'.

## New Lean milestone: Over 100 Kaizen events

The Enterprise Lean program achieved a new milestone of 100 Kaizen events, which comes as the program approaches the end of its second year of operation.

With the goal of placing active, sustainable process improvement programs in all state agencies by the end of 2010, this latest milestone is a clear indicator that state agencies are on track to achieve this goal.

Credit must be given where credit is due. The milestone is the direct result of the hard work and dedication of nearly 1,000 state employees who have taken apart processes, identified waste, brainstormed improvements and put their ideas into action. The results of their thoughts and actions are dramatic improvements in the way their work gets done and the quality of the services they deliver.



### DHS Personal Care Attendant Enrollment Process

#### Before Lean Kaizen event

In queue, 3,000 applications

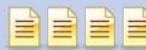


Typical turnaround time, 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> weeks



#### After Lean Kaizen event

In queue, 400 applications



Turnaround time, 2 to 3 days



EACH DOCUMENT ICON REPRESENTS 100 APPLICATIONS

### Lean training

The Office of Continuous Improvement is offering Lean 101 on January 26 and Kaizen Facilitator training on January 27 - 28. Training is free to public sector employees. Contact [Alisha.Cowell@state.mn.us](mailto:Alisha.Cowell@state.mn.us) to register.

"The most dangerous kind of waste is the waste we do not recognize."

*Shigeo Shingo*  
*Toyota Motor Company*

### E-Learn Update

Thank you for your interest and participation in improving the efficiency of Minnesota state government operations. If you have further questions, comments or would like to set up a Lean improvement event, please contact Tom Baumann at [Tom.Baumann@state.mn.us](mailto:Tom.Baumann@state.mn.us).

This material can be given to you in a different format such as large print, Braille, or audio tape or disk by calling 651-201-2555. Customers with a hearing or speech disability may call us through the Minnesota Relay Service at 711 or 800-627-3529, or via email at [admin.info@state.mn.us](mailto:admin.info@state.mn.us).