



October 2012

Going through the motions?

I recently stumbled across a scholarly paper from the Harvard Business School entitled “Going through the Motions, Management Involvement in Process Improvement.”

Carefully annotated with four pages of references and based on an empirical study of 69 organizations, this head-spinning document ultimately came to a simple, and powerful conclusion:

“Managers play a critical role in process improvement. Many improvement efforts fail because of insufficient management involvement.”

So what does good management involvement look like? From this study came three very practical, yet powerful behaviors:

1. Managers must become more informed about problems by interacting with frontline workers. Seeing firsthand and listening to frontline workers will give managers a more accurate understanding of the “real” problem (what is the root cause of this situation).
2. Take action on a discrete number of problems. Collecting a laundry list of improvement opportunities without taking action will have a negative impact on process improvement. Identify an actionable number of issues and commit to resolving them.
3. Communicate honestly about actions taken. If the issues cannot be addressed right now, let the organization know why. If the improvement only solves part of the problem, let them know why and what steps, if any, will be taken later. Or if the issue is resolved, let the organization know how and what impacts the employees should expect to see as a result.

Ultimately this research finds that managers who are serious about organizational excellence must go beyond superficial interactions with frontline staff to truly understand issues; take substantive and intense action to resolve them; and provide an honest assessment of their actions and outcomes to convince frontline workers that management is serious.

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Don't forget!

All state employees are encouraged to submit a nomination for an individual or team that has demonstrated a commitment to improvement **by October 19.**

All qualified nominees and award recipients will be recognized at a recognition event in December.

Otherwise, your organization will quickly realize that you are just going through the motions.

Department of Labor and Industry streamlines workers' compensation investigations

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry held a Kaizen event September 11 to 13 to streamline Special Compensation Fund investigations. The Special Compensation assessment funds workers' compensation programs in Minnesota.

The goals of the event were to enable all investigations to begin within one business day of assignment, improve the quality of information gathered through investigations and eliminate duplicated staff effort.

By updating templates, standardizing documents and increasing collaboration between staff, the new process will reduce wait time, increase the value of information gathered through investigations and improve internal communications between staff.



The Department of Labor and Industry Special Compensation Fund Kaizen team.

In addition to meeting the event goal of starting investigations within one business day of assignment, the Kaizen team reduced task time by 18 percent.

The Department of Labor and Industry's mission is to ensure Minnesota's work and living environments are equitable, healthy and safe.

Upcoming Events

- Oct. 9**, Lean 101, Registration Full
- Oct. 10-11**, Kaizen Facilitator Training, Registration Full
- Oct. 12**, DPS Lean 101
- Oct. 18**, DNR Lean 101
- Oct. 22**, Lean 101, Registration Full
- Oct. 23-24**, Kaizen Facilitator Training, Registration Full
- Oct. 30**, SE Minnesota Lean 101
- Oct. 31-Nov. 1**, SE Minnesota Kaizen Facilitator Training
- Nov. 13**, Hennepin County Lean 101
- Nov. 14**, Hennepin County Kaizen Facilitator Training
- Nov. 26-30**, Board of Teaching Kaizen Event
- Nov. 30**, Lean 101, **Registration Open**
- Dec. 3**, Association of MN Counties Presentation
- Dec. 18**, Lean 101, **Registration Open**
- Dec. 19-20**, Kaizen Facilitator Training, **Registration Open**

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