



Detailed Lean Improvement Project Report

For the June 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014, reporting period

Agency name: Employment Security Department - WorkSource Mountlake Terrace

Improvement project title: Office and Supply Organization – Lean 6-S

Date improvement project initiated: 3/17/14

Summary:

WorkSource Mountlake Terrace improved its office and supply organization, resulting in an increase in efficiency of 91 percent.

Description of the problem:

Wanting to develop a Lean culture in our office, we decided to choose a problem that hit home with staff to best showcase the value Lean processes and principles can bring to the everyday workplace:

In August 2013, we moved rather suddenly from Lynnwood to our current location in Mountlake Terrace. The move took a little more than two and a half months, which is lightning quick for an office of our size. Moves typically take up to two years to plan and complete. While the move itself was successful, it left the office disorganized, and employees were frustrated trying to find everything. It was common to hear people ask each other if they knew where to find supplies, tools and information. Knowing that excess worker movement and transportation are two types of waste identified in Lean, we saw a real opportunity to improve efficiency. The office also lacked a clear planning and ordering process for supplies and materials, which at times resulted in additional frustration for staff -- materials often would run out. Finally, we believe workplace organization can help improve morale by eliminating the frustration and stress people feel when forced to spend time searching for things.

Description of improvement:

We used our weekly all-staff meetings to explain each step we would take to improve efficiency:

1. Sort – Separate the necessary from the unnecessary.
2. Simplified storage – A place for everything and everything in its place.
3. Shine – Clean and inspect.
4. Standardize – Standard operating procedures & work instructions (reduced variation)
5. Sustain – Maintain improvements and gains.
6. Safety – Eliminate known safety hazards and plan for emergencies to ensure a safe working environment.

We took “before photos” and then ran a baseline exercise to see how much time was being wasted. We made a list of items and then timed people to see how long it took them to find those items. The average time was calculated at 32 minutes. This was a real eye opener, not only for those who participated in the exercise, but also for those who witnessed it. We discovered that without the awareness created by this kind of Lean exercise, people just don’t realize how much time is being lost.



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We explained to staff that even if they learned where to find things by memorizing locations, we needed to consider the experience for new employees and visitors. We needed to remove unnecessary and outdated items and then create a place for everything left.

We would also cut down on worker movement and transportation by locating items in areas that made the most sense, e.g., supply cabinets in the work area for frequently used items and storage rooms for items deemed necessary, but used infrequently.

By organizing our wall space into clearly defined categories, we also improved customer service. Job seekers immediately started noticing job postings, event fliers and handouts. As a result, we have received positive comments from customers who appreciate the enhancements.

To improve safety in the workplace, we:

- Organized our safety and first-aid supplies, and ensured that the cabinet is clearly marked.
- Made safety a regular topic at staff meetings.
- Reduced tripping hazards in our storage room by moving things from the floor to shelves.
- Stopped stacking boxes, eliminating the need to lift items to get to what is underneath and reducing the chance of injury.

We saved an estimated \$3,200 by reusing metal cabinets and shelving pulled from other state offices and stored in Olympia. The delivery of these items was coordinated with the pickup of items we determined we no longer needed, freeing up items to be reused elsewhere and maximizing the efficiency of the truck run.

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Results

In order to calculate the improvement in efficiency, we repeated the exercise, timing employees while they found items. The new average time to find the items was three minutes – a reduction of 29 minutes!

Knowing that many projects fail due to lack of sustainability and control, we developed standard operating procedures and have made plans for quarterly workplace inspections. These should ensure that the improvements we made to WorkSource Mountlake Terrace are here to stay.

After completing the organization and cleaning portion of the project, we took “after” photos to visually document improvements.

Before



After





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How we involved customers or stakeholders in this effort:

The end-user was directly involved throughout the entire project. Staff managed the project, performed the before-and-after timing and measurement exercises, problem-solved solutions and implemented all of the changes. This project was fully performed by those who directly felt the effects of all decisions and solutions.

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