Strategic Lean Project Report

WSAC Accounting and Laserfiche Project

Agency: Washington Student Achievement Council

Partners and Customers: All agency staff

Project Impact

WSAC improved accounting's processes by introducing a paperless routing system for all documents. There is a substantial cost avoidance savings in staff time, paper storage, and having access to the electronic repository for ease in gathering information:

- With paper no longer stored after 90 days, storage fees were reduced $180 per fiscal year ($30 per box/6 boxes per year)
- Phase I - batch processing time reduced 12%, from 169 minutes to 149 minutes
- Researching time for accounting documents reduced 93%, from nine minutes to 40 seconds

Impacts to Washingtonians
- Faster payments through reduced processing time
- Faster responses to customer inquiries through electronic repository with quicker research capabilities

These impacts directly correlate to our strategic plan's mission of supporting Washingtonians through the administration of financial aid, 529 college savings plans, and support services, and to the strategic plan objective of incorporating Lean and other continual process improvements.

Project Summary

The process previously used by WSAC Accounting was performed using a paper batch method, with paper records then stored in multiple file cabinets. Two years' worth of information was held at the agency, and additional years were sent to the state records center. This meant that staff had to sort through files and cabinets to retrieve or review a previously paid invoice (contract, field order, etc.) or request a box be sent from the state records center.

Problem Statement

WSAC Accounting staff were finalizing and routing more than 17,000 sheets of paper per year to submit payments into the AFRS system, and then retaining the paper in file cabinets. WSAC Accounting's target for Phase I was to have a routing system in place and eliminate all paper (following the 90-day hold) by July 1, 2019.

Improvements Made

By June of 2019, WSAC Accounting implemented a consistent approach for payment batches and retention:
- Created a standardized approach to retrieve and review past accounting documents
- Automated steps within the process
- Disposed of all paper after a 90-day holding period
- Improved communication regarding the process
- Provided training to all team members

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Project Results

Cost

Reduced storages fees from $180 to $0 for accounting files held at the state records center. Additional savings in supply costs and staff time to research customer inquiries.

→ Substantial future cost avoidance savings.

Quality

Increased the quality of WSAC Accounting's batch, retention, and researching processes.

→ Eliminates the need for housing paper records.

Time

Decreased time spent researching accounting documents from nine minutes to 40 seconds. Decreased Phase I batch processing by 20 minutes per batch.

→ Increased efficiency saves time for staff and for customers.

Customer Satisfaction

Reduced time spent processing payments, as well as time research customer inquiries. More timely information available for auditor's review and CAFR reporting.

→ Faster payments to customers, and quicker response time to inquiries.

Employee Engagement

Staff can access all accounting documents in a matter of seconds from their desk. No need to walk between buildings and search file cabinets. Staff were involved in improving processes, and training has been provided.

→ Frees up staff time to focus on more substantive work.

Project Details

Date improvement project was initiated: 1/2/2019
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Report reviewed and approved by: Don Bennett, WSAC Deputy Director