

Various levels of process efficiency (3/20/17)

In an earlier edition of Flash News we wrote about the three main reasons that hinder process efficiency improvements: lack of clarity about goals and how to achieve them, staff resistance to change, and inability to achieve efficiency in the long term. This article takes a look at potential solutions to these problems.

Recipes for implementing process efficiency projects successfully

There are a number of ways to make your processes efficient. All you need to do is choose the method and approach (e.g. Lean, Kaizen, Six Sigma, 5S) that is best suited for your situation, and put together a results-oriented team, set up a performance monitoring system, make practical changes to your processes, use appropriate ICT support etc.

Implementing changes

Changes can be implemented by taking ten steps. These steps and their goals are described in the table below:

| Step | Goal |
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| Define your vision | <p>Start and keep up efficient planning that ensures you will achieve your main organisational goals.</p> <p>We often see in practice that a plan is understood to mean just a timetable. For efficiency projects, however, a benefit management plan is crucial (i.e. one that shows what qualitative and quantitative benefits the project will bring).</p> |
| Set up information centres | <p>Understand what your information sources are and where you can obtain the necessary data to carry out a proper analysis.</p> <p>Such information centres are your corporate information systems, procedure descriptions, customer surveys, various statistics etc.</p> |
| Hold planning meetings/monitor performance | <p>Start daily meetings and run training courses for managers about their content, style, approach and staff/team management methods.</p> <p>Everyone knows that if any change is to be implemented successfully, it must be discussed with and accepted by your staff. For this purpose it's very important to build a structured communication approach.</p> |
| Implement visual management | <p>Set up, streamline and involve staff in visual management on each site.</p> <p>Your staff should know how far you are on your way to your goal. Simple solutions do the job, e.g. information posted on a noticeboard or on the intranet.</p> |
| Adopt a daily/weekly routine and practice | <p>Analyse your operations and identify issues on each site. How is time being spent? Does that add value?</p> <p>If your company operates a timesheet system where staff record hours spent on activities, this is very helpful in planning for changes. Without such a system, you should think of some other methods, e.g. time monitoring, self-assessment questionnaires.</p> |

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| Adopt a common approach to analysis | <p>Adopting mandatory business procedures, including meeting minutes and customer details, process mapping, RACI etc.</p> <p>It's especially important that you define such a common approach to analysis standards on large projects served by multiple teams. Without a common approach, it's difficult to steer the project towards a common goal. An approach that motivates staff and managers by recognising good results and hard work.</p> |
| Celebrate success | <p>Celebrate your successes, however small they might be, such as completed stages of a project, as that will inspire your team to carry on and complete the whole project successfully.</p> |