

DDSP Lean machine has a PIT Team

By Chris Polny, Performance Improvement Team

Defense Distribution Depot Susquehanna, Pa., now has its own Performance Improvement Team. Assembly of the team began in June 2006. Its last member, the Lean Champion, recently arrived.

The team members are Mike Watson, the recently arrived supervisor and Lean Champion Mary Hertzog, Karl Krouch, Keith Thomas, and Chris Polny. The team was formed in order to propagate Lean values and principles among the work force by arranging Lean Principle classes and Rapid Improvement Events. The results generate opportunities for DDSP to reach its vision of being the Department of Defense's best distribution center.

One PIT activity is teaching classes such as Lean Principles. This is an introductory course that presents the principles of Lean thinking. It outlines how to identify areas of waste to create a better work environment by streamlining processes and organization of work areas, as well as eliminating non-value added activities. The class has received a warm response from more than 300 employees who have attended as of October 2006.

What makes it so successful is the hands-on approach used during the exercise. Employees participate directly in simulating the impact of a manufacturing process full of wasteful, non-value added processes, and then remove the waste to see the positive impact that has on the operation. The class is currently taught by contractors, but the PIT has assumed a larger role in each session and will eventually be the sole instructors.

Key to the success of Lean is identifying customers and their needs. In order to do this, the PIT team organizes teams of employees, work leaders, supervisors, and managers to address the culture which makes up the



Karl Krouch, left, and Kevin Mitchell discuss process steps and accumulated time during a Lean study for DDSP's outbound operations.

current environment. One of the core values of Lean is respect for people. As an example, employees from areas targeted for a Lean initiative play a central role in developing improved processes, which are aimed at reducing non-value added activities under their control. These Lean initiatives, or RIEs, have employees brainstorm, solve problems, map out processes, implement improvements and, most importantly, perform follow up actions.

The Lean philosophy has been tested and put into action through RIEs in the Air Lines of Communication Point, the surface outbound functions of the Eastern Distribution Center, and most recently in the hazardous material warehouse. The out-loading bay in the warehouse was recently reconfigured to shorten forklift travel distances for high volume staging lanes, and to support first-in-first-out inventory management. Reconfiguration included the replacement of staging lane signs and the painting of new lines on the floor.

"The introduction of Lean initiatives into DDSP's Hazardous Material Section has had a dramatic, positive impact on operations," said John A. Price II, supervisor, Hazardous Material

Section. "In addition to improving the flow and efficiency within the Containerization and Consolidation Point, or CCP, and out loading bays, it has energized employees to participate in evaluating these and other processes for improvement.

"Employees eagerly provide their input to bring about change that would not have otherwise occurred," Price added. "The attitude in the section now is one of empowerment. Empowerment to create a working environment that reflects the pride and professionalism of employees who handle and package hazardous materials on a daily basis; and this is only just the beginning."

Another recent event was a Value Stream Mapping exercise for the outbound operations of the warehouse. Six employees from Outbound, along with the PIT and support staff spent five days gathering data, mapping processes, and discussing current operations. The time spent resulted in the identification of waste and opportunities in the Value Stream. Because of this effort, a RIE has been scheduled for the outbound process of issuing supplies picked-up by small parcel carriers, the Automatic Weight and Offering System.

Other projects are being conducted

to determine if radio frequency systems can be implemented to improve outbound operations, and studies are looking at the process of booking sea containers. Each project includes the ideas of employees who are ultimately instrumental in implementing the improvements.

DDSP's executive leadership is formulating ways that the PIT can branch out in the future and continue to improve service to our primary customer, the war fighter.



Defense Distribution Depot Susquehanna, Pa.'s Hazardous Material Outloading area shows noticeable improvement as a result of a Lean Rapid Improvement Event. The RIE incorporated input from the employees who work in the area.

Units band together to defeat waste in shipping and receiving

By 1st Lt. Christopher Lundell, USAF, Warner Robins Air Force Base

Recently, the 402d Maintenance Wing and Defense Distribution Depot Warner Robins, Ga., worked together to create a plan for improving the process for receiving, storing, issuing, and shipping parts used and repaired by the avionics depot.

The event was led by the commander of the Warner Robins Air Force Base 402d Maintenance Wing, Air Force Brig. Gen. Andrew Busch, USAF. Team members included DDWG Commander Air Force Col. Elizabeth Moore, USAF, other members of the 402d Maintenance Wing and DDWG as well as representatives from the 542d Combat Sustainment Wing, the 330th Aircraft Sustainment Wing, and LESCO, the contractor that performs DDWG's mission work. Additionally, James Hiatt, an operations coordinator with the Logistics Division of Wal-Mart, was brought in to provide outside expertise.

After several planning meetings over the past few months, the team kicked off the Lean event on a Monday. They started by defining what they needed to do and why. On Tuesday, the group toured the major on-base DDWG warehouses and walked through the avionics depot. Later that night, the group traveled to LaGrange, Ga., and visited a Wal-Mart Regional Distribution Center to look at their operations.

The team closely analyzed the current process for parts shipping and receiving. After that, they determined the ideal process. They took into account roadblocks that couldn't be changed to come up with a realistic process and an action plan that will be implemented over the next 18 months.

The plan will speed up parts delivery by moving the storage locations for the parts closer to the avionics depot

and creating a mechanism for sending critical parts directly to the avionics depot without going through most of the processing that normally occurs when they arrive on the base. As a result, the number of days it takes the avionics depot to repair a part should be reduced from an average of 26 days to 21 days.

The team took away more than just a plan for shipping and receiving. The event helped the participants understand the challenges faced by other organizations. Moore noted, "Through this event, we were able to form a partnership between DDWG and the 402d Maintenance Wing. DDWG is an integral part of production and war fighter support. We were delighted to participate."

Brian Keeling, a Lean consultant and facilitator for this event, also believes the outcome of this event highlights the relationship between DDWG and the 402d Maintenance Wing. "This team is on the right track. With AFSO-21 [Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century] being implemented on the shop floor and the administrative areas, it was only a matter of time before DDWG was asked to examine the supply management processes that affect the maintenance wing."

