



# Continuous Process Improvement training enables DDC leaders to establish a problem-solving culture

By Emily Blubaugh, DDC Public Affairs

“What you do as leaders on a day-to-day basis, how you handle the problems this organization faces, and how you teach others to solve those problems is what defines our organization’s culture,” was the main message to 17 Defense Distribution Center leaders during a recent DDC Level 1 training. The attendees, from four depots and DDC’s expeditionary logistics directorate, attended the training to collectively learn how to improve process management skills and use a standard problem-solving process to create and sustain a continuous improvement culture.

“The goal is to provide leaders with an understanding and basic application of the cultural capabilities required to pursue DDC’s “Operational Excellence” strategy as outlined in the DDC Commander’s Guidance. Operational Excellence requires a problem-solving culture,” said DDC chief integration officer Perry Knight.

The five-day classroom lecture includes a world-class hands-on simulation focused on the principles and distinct cultural patterns of high-performing organizations, which include the following capabilities:

- Capability 1: Design and operate work to reveal problems. Instrumental to continuous process improvement is designing a process to make problems visible. Simply stated, until problems (or deviations from standard) are visible, they cannot be solved. It is also critical during design to build quality into the process. Opportunities for improvement are created by building quality into a process through a “test”

to predict what will happen during the operation of the process and making the outputs of the test available to all employees.

- Capability 2: Contain and solve problems close in person, place, and time. A paradox exists within this idea: Small problems are much easier to fix than major problems, yet small problems are often ignored because they are small. It is important for organizations to expose problems as a part of normal business, so that small problems don’t go unaddressed creating larger and more serious issues. Problems need to be contained, investigated, and resolved by those closest to the issue, therefore, building



Defense Distribution Center leaders attend Level 1 training to learn how to create and sustain a continuous improvement culture.

and exercising problem-solving skills is an important capability for everyone from top management to frontline workers. Ultimately, a shared process exists where little problems will be solved before they combine with circumstances to become big ones, and root causes will be addressed as opposed to symptoms.

- **Capability 3: Accumulate and share knowledge.** Knowledge and learning go hand-in-hand in a problem-solving culture, with the ideas that knowledge is the understanding gained through experience and learning is improving through the use of better knowledge. Leaders need to manage knowledge as an asset by documenting best practices gained through Capability 2 (problem solving close in person, place and time) and sharing this knowledge across the organization. Management of knowledge includes creating a means for access when and

where the knowledge is needed, and this can be done through the use of CPI tools, such as Standard Operating Procedures, Process Flows, and Layered Check/Act Boards.

- **Capability 4: Leaders coach and develop the previous capabilities.** Because employees are the most valuable asset of an organization, leaders must invest in the development of people like any other asset. If utilized effectively, raising the capability of an individual ultimately raises the capability of the organization.

Additionally, students leveraged an interactive “Car Building” simulation throughout, which allowed them to compare and integrate theory with practical application, helping to solidify course learning. The simulation demonstrated the benefits of the capabilities at its most basic level, while also highlighting the possibilities when applied to its fuller potential. It also provided a platform for hands-on learning

of key principles, tools, and techniques.

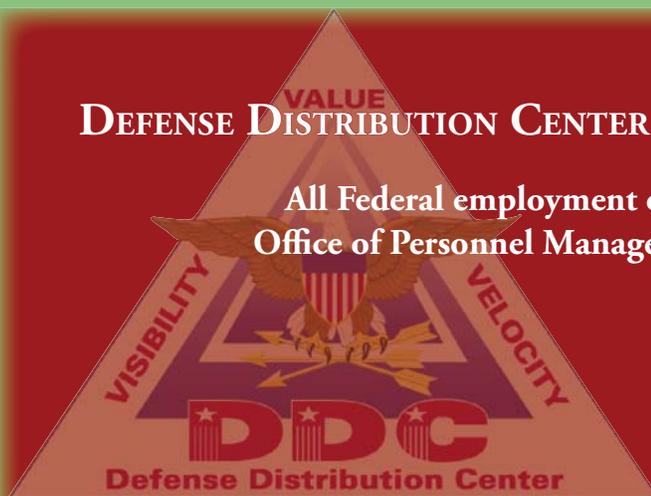
After participation in the week-long training, the leaders completed a final exam, and pending the completion of a follow-up project in which they lead a team through the problem-solving process to solve a problem within their process, they will have satisfied the requirements for OSD DLA Continuous Process Improvement Certification and DLA Green Belt Certification.

“What we hope these leaders take away from this development opportunity is the idea that high-performing organizations are process-driven!” said DDC culture champion John Destalo.

“The challenge for leaders in a process driven organization, is to understand how to design, develop, and improve organizational processes and the capabilities of the people who operate them. Doing so will create an organization that is driven to achieve operational excellence,” he continued.

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