Kaizen at PMI - Puget Sound | End Notes

Mon, 04/23/2007 - 07:22 — Chris

The talk on Friday went well - everyone seemed engaged. There were a number of questions:

1) How do you make these type of efforts sustainable?

Ans: We all have suffered from the 'flavor of the month' program and are quite aware of the pitfalls that lie ahead of us in championing these types efforts. Some of the ways that were talked about include:

a) Organizational adherence to a strategy process, which then drives common goals across the enterprise. This reinforces the balanced scorecards and the techniques that we use to measure, evaluate, identify improvements, and implement change. This requires a mature leadership team that takes the time to develop and communicate an overall business strategy, built into the fabric of goal deployment that each employee then understands their contribution. I've seen this work well in some companies (big [AT&T] and small [Xantrex]), however, the discipline to stick to it is often lacking.

b) Assigning resources such as Green Belts and Black Belts as champions go along way to institutionalizing a continuous improvement culture. When you want something done, having the ability to point to someone whose job it is to do it is always beneficial. In some organizations, six sigma efforts have gone a long way [e.g. Expedia, Amazon, WaMu], by having people annointed with the title or moniker Green or Black Belt. In other companies, even when there were people assigned to a Six Sigma group, the culture fought it as cumbersome and too restricting.

c) Develop internal material or seek out suppliers that teach people TQM / Six Sigma / Lean / whatever label you want / techniques to help them do their jobs better and solve real and important problems. In this way, folks can 'own' their development and be exposed to tools and skills that they can take away to any job they go to. It doesn't require a lot of company investment, therefore, its fairly easy to sell and everyone has an equal opportunity to take advantage of it. At the same time the company is growing a continuous improvement focused culture. And if the program is positioned right, it doesn't have the 'flavor of the month' feel. The downside - it takes a long time to see on an enterprise scale real change in the culture. These three mechanisms are not mutually exclusive or all inclusive and everyone is encouraged to find the best way that works for them and their company.

2) Where can I find resources for some of the tools that were mentioned in the talk?

Ans: I had referenced a number of materials during my talk - you can find a listing of the texts on my **site** [1]. I don't remember many of the questions - next time I need to have a better way of keeping track. However, if there are folks from the class that read this blog, perhaps they can post their questions along with their thoughts.

- Performance Management [2]
- Quality Excellence [3]
- Supply Chain Management [4]

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