Disseminating Lean Philosophy to the Lehigh Valley Health Network

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Disseminating Lean Philosophy to the Lehigh Valley Health Network

Lauren Ranzino, Research Scholar Program

Background

Lean is a philosophy, or way of thinking, for how a company can improve quality, reduce costs, increase patient satisfaction and allow for operational excellence through standardization and simplified processes. It is largely derived from the Toyota Production System, an efficient manufacturing system, where waste is significantly reduced along the supply chain and focus was put on activities that exceeded expectations of customer value.

The leader in Lean implementation in the healthcare industry is Virginia Mason Hospital, located in Seattle, Washington. The Lehigh Valley Health Network’s (LVHN) mission along with its Lean department is to get to a level similar to that of Virginia Mason’s over the next few years.

One way for LVHN to achieve this is by creating a Lean Quick Reference Guide.

Purpose

The goal of the Lean Quick Reference Guide project was to disseminate Lean philosophy, tools and resources through a thorough and easily understood format. The guide is compact and portable so that employees may refer to it quickly and at any time.

I also revised the SharePoint site on the intranet which contains all of the materials for the Lean Certification class along with handouts, articles, and important templates used for the class and during any Lean management workshops.

It is imperative that all LVHN employees can easily access these tools.

The survey gauged interest for creating the Lean Quick Reference Guide. It targeted all of the Lean Certification Participants throughout the entire duration of the program.

The Lean Quick Reference Guide information drew from the Lean Intranet website, the “Lean 101: Identifying Waste” and “Lean 101: Removing Waste” modules, and documents and PowerPoint from the SharePoint “Lean Certification” site.

By editing the SharePoint website, the Lean department can now access and distribute information easily.

Results

Sixty-three of the 100 Lean Certification Participants responded to the survey.

Q: “The activity has improved...”
All five metrics improved almost equally. Emphasis should be placed on the competencies that best align to department and network Triple Aim goals.

• Notable responses from the open-ended sections of the survey.

It appears that LVHN employees want Lean to be taught and implemented at every level. Without a strong basis and support from all sides, the LVHN cannot meet its goals to become Lean and employees will constantly struggle with barriers.

Eighty-five percent of respondents said that they would like to have a Lean Quick Reference Guide. This metric substantiates the need for the project I have been working on for the duration of the internship.

Important Comments

- Majority of the respondents publicly at higher management levels and physicians stated they do not understand A3 thinking and the value of using Lean tools and therefore are not engaged in using these concepts and processes. This is generally a lack of understanding existed at what A3 is and its value on the company’s mission.
- “Need to provide documentation on what a Lean A3 is” and “Need to get everyone across the board”
- “Need to implement Lean and get all colleagues on board”
- “Need to improve Lean tools" and “Needs to be implemented steadily”
- “Certifying 100 or so middle managers which will Lean will not move the process. Upper management does not apply Lean correctly, effectively, has slow down”
- “The second and result of an A3 is based on who is reviewing it. One area could vary greatly between two areas and another may be given better results."
- “I would hate to see anyone do another project at LVHN and not have a Lean Quick Reference Guide and would feel it beneficial”

People want to see...
- Clinical examples and applications of Lean
- LUHS Wallace for Lean for staff, where the Lean work is actually being completed
- Lean templates/tools for reference (clinical based)

The Lean Quick Reference Guide is in its beginning stages. I have completed 85 PowerPoint slides so far which includes background information of Lean philosophy, multiple tools that were taught throughout the Lean Certification class, examples of templates, etc.

The Lean department staff will continue to add slides to the guide once they finalize the class curriculum and make any other changes. I have included two slides from the guide as an example.

Conclusion

The Lean department desires to organize and distribute relevant, helpful information for its employees so that the LVHN can have a strong base of people throughout the network who understand the importance and basics of Lean management in order to further its goal of becoming a more Lean organization.

The survey impacted the Lean Department by providing insight into the Lean Certification program. The Lean Coaches have started to make changes based on the survey results. My Lean Quick Reference Guide (and the other components of my project) will help forward the goals of the Lean department to cut waste across the board, increase and maintain process improvements, increase employee’s productivity, improve the quality of patient care, reduce wasted time for all employees and patients, etc.

Removing waste, standardizing work and engaging all employees in a Lean mindset will save a lot of money for the network over time and allow for the network to continue to grow and prosper.

I would like to thank Shelly Schaefer, my project mentor, for teaching me so much about Lean methodology, providing great learning opportunities for me within the network, and overseeing my project for the duration of my internship. I would also like to thank Jane Grube, one of the Lean Coaches, for helping me develop and analyze the survey that was sent out to the Lean Certification Participants, Lastly, the entire Lean Department along with a few employees in the Organizational Development Department have provided me with additional information and their insights which contributed to my overall project.