NHDES LEAN Team

Case Study # 2009-01

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Summary

Organization

Division

Water

Business Problem

Administrative staff type about 4,000 file labels per year using a typewriter, tying up valuable staff time.

Methodology

Software review by programmers knowledgable in FoxPro and Access

Solution

Labels print using database information already entered during application log-in.

Benefits/Results

Saving over 25 hours per year.

Key Tools Used

- 5S
- Brainstorming
- Pilot

Idea

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Team Leader

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Wetland File Labeling

Though identical information was entered into the tracking database, Wetlands and Shoreland administrative staff spent hours each year typing file folder labels on a typewriter.

The process was hardly fluid, with files waiting for labels before being put away. Naming conventions were abandoned to speed up the filing and the file names were sometimes different from the project names.

The Process & The Bumps

The task seemed simple enough; get the database to print the label. Not so simple.

Due to the lack of source code for the aging FoxPro database, it was decided to create a new utility using MS Access to retrieve the needed data and print the labels. Prior to this point, the printing of labels had been a manual process, accomplished by many different people, so there was little consistency in either the content or the layout of the labels.

The new standard was created over the course of a couple of short meetings between the stakeholders and developer. Another consideration was that the labels currently used in the manual process were of a non-standard type. To solve this problem a different standard sized label that worked well with MS Access was used.

The new labels were also on a paper size that makes it easier for the users, since they would no longer have to change printer settings. The developer then created the code to retrieve the data.

The deployment phase uncovered a compatibility issue between the MS Access versions being used by Wetlands and the developer. As it turns out, Wetlands is using an older version that required the developer to modify the labeler's code to account for those differences.

> "It's just beauteous, isn't it?"
>
> -Vanessa
> General Staff
> …reacting to the first sheet of labels from the new process.

The Results

Despite the 20 hours taken to delve into and understand the system to create the final product, the Team considers the project a success.

Why?

- 25 hours saved
- Intangible frustration with a typewriter eliminated
- Consistency at 100% between file name and project name
- The computer system does what it was designed to do (despite having to compensate for its age and substandard utility).

Team

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