



DES LEAN Team

Case Study # 2010-03

Project Name: *Travel Authorizations*

Summary

Scope: Department-wide

Business Problem:

The previous travel authorization process was a consistent source of complaints from staff – it was seen as too complex, with multiple, i.e., redundant, approvals. This objection especially applied to low or no cost travel requests.

Methodology:

Process mapping, extensive customer acceptance testing.

Solution:

A new travel authorization form was designed that includes the information from two other, now obsolete, forms. A new approval process was designed that requires only one signature – who makes that approval depends on the number of travelers and the budget commitment.

Benefits/Results:

- Fewer forms
- Redundant approvals eliminated
- Supervisors track budget more closely
- Management of state fleet improved

Idea Source:

Staff suggestion

Lean Event Facilitator:

Bob Minicucci x 2941

The Problem

The previous travel authorization process was a consistent source of complaints from staff – it was seen as too complex, with multiple, i.e., redundant, approvals. This objection especially applied to low or no cost travel requests. The mere length of the approval process could also result in multiple proposed trips/travelers thinking they had access to the same funds, resulting in confusion and un-needed work by managers and accounting staff to find a way to pay for multiple trips that had been approved to use the same funds.

"I'm loving it. Facility Services is automatically notified when travel is approved so we don't have to chase down individuals' forms for yearly reporting on state vehicles. I can save it electronically and save wasting paper and can easily keep track of them as they are approved."

Normajean Smith
Facility Services

The Process

The previous process was mapped to ensure a common understanding. Changes were brainstormed and a future paperless process designed and mapped. The future process was "shopped" throughout the department to ensure understanding and buy-in; it was met with universal approval. It was then decided that IT staff did not have the resources to do the work that would make this process paperless; the team re-grouped and made the minor changes needed in light of that.

A new Standard Operating Procedure as well as training and support documents were drafted. These new procedures were "test-driven" by DES staff, and changes made in response.

It was found during the process that two forms could be eliminated by including the needed information in the new travel authorization form. A spreadsheet was imbedded in the new travel authorization form to lower the rate of arithmetic errors.

The Results

In summary, a traveler works out the budget with her/his supervisor and then gets a single approval signature for a proposed trip from the lowest feasible supervisory level – that necessary level goes "up the org chart" from the immediate supervisor to the Assistant Commissioner as the number of travelers and budget commitment rises.

Two forms have been eliminated by including the needed information in the travel approval form, the need for multiple approval signatures has been eliminated, and a quicker, single-signature, process has been put in place as of October 1, 2011.

Additionally, the Facility Services Unit has found benefit from the direct notification of travel approvals which they now receive, making their required annual reporting of state vehicle use much easier.

The Team

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