



DES LEAN Team

Case Study # 2010-01



Summary

Scope: Department-wide

Business Problem:

The single DES conference call (concall) line had been reserved on several occasions by staff without them first providing an account number. Tracking down these "rogue" calls not only wasted Administrative Services Unit (ASU) staff time, it also required disruptive department-wide e-mails. To make matters worse, the ASU had to absorb the costs of these rogue calls.

Methodology:

Brainstorming changes to the reservation procedures with ASU staff, "good" users, and the call vendor.

Solution:

"Mistake-proofed" the concall reservation process by requiring that account numbers be entered on an enhanced reservation form.

Benefits/Results:

- Complete account data
- Low transaction costs
- Intuitive invoices with reference codes
- No mass e-mails
- Continuity of service
- Fewer delays / less waiting
- Seamless to users
- Now have multiple lines
- User cards with unique PINs

Idea Source:

Traci Knieriemen x 2090

Lean Event Facilitator:

Vince Perelli x 8989

Project Name: *Conference Call Reservations*

The Problem

The previous conference call reservation process was fairly straightforward for staff to navigate and not particularly difficult for Administrative Services Unit (ASU) staff to administer. However, an increasing number of conference calls were being placed that did not include an account number to which the call fees could be charged. This required ASU staff to send out broadcast e-mails to track down the missing information. In addition to wasting ASU staff time, distracting the attention of the entire agency, and taking up e-mail server space, the outreach was largely ineffective. As a result, the ASU was forced to absorb the costs of these "orphan" conference calls so as not to disrupt conference call service by delaying payments while tracking down calls.

The Process

While there are some sophisticated tools in the Lean "toolbox," the "fix" for this particular issue warranted a more basic approach, while still following core Lean principles. Given some past history with the conference call system, a Lean Team member approached ASU staff with an offer to help facilitate a possible solution to the problem. It was important at this stage to allow the ASU staff to design the "right" solution that made sense to their customers (i.e., conference call users), as well as to themselves. Based on some early conversations, it became apparent that the reservation system basically worked fine and that only small changes would be necessary to correct the problem. The final solution that ASU staff designed involved establishing a new, "mistake-proof" conference call reservation procedure that makes it impossible to conduct a conference call without staff first providing an account number and obtaining unique, permanent PIN codes that are directly tied to that single account number.

"My experience with the Lean Team was a positive one. Initially, it was really hard to take the time the Lean Team requested from me in order to streamline this process, but in the end, it was worth the time investment. Now, looking back and knowing that I will never have to disrupt all of DES, including busy Supervisors, hunt for orgs./funds to pay invoices from, or delay payments to A+ Conferencing, I am relieved. I would encourage others to look at where time is being wasted in their jobs. Even if they think it is a 'small' time waster, it all really adds up."

"Things are going smoothly, and believe it or not, just as planned. I am now seeing the invoices with reference codes on them, and I think people in general are happy with this system. The fact that it is easy for staff to obtain their passcodes and that multiple calls can be made at the same time are added bonuses. A+ has been great about giving passcodes in a timely manner."

Traci Knieriemen
Account Technician

The Results

Implementing this one change, in addition to some minor modifications to the on-line calendar reservation form, has eliminated the need to hunt down "rogue" calls; mass e-mails are no longer required, and ASU no longer has to absorb the costs of these unclaimed calls. There were also some unexpected benefits! As a result of using unique PIN codes, concurrent calls are now possible, where previously only one call could be made at a time. To help keep track of their PIN codes, users now receive a card that can be used for placing future calls without any further action by ASU staff. Finally, the ASU now receives invoices that use reference codes for every call placed by staff -- no more guesswork!

The Team

- Traci Knieriemen x 2090
- Kerry O'Connor x 2966
- Vince Perelli (Facilitator) x 8989