

Client: Business Services, major high street bank
Assignment: Lean Pilot demonstrating a Rapid Improvement Event

Rapid Improvement Event increases productivity by 15%

A Rapid Improvement Event (RIE) is an intense effort over 2-5 days for a small team to analyse and improve a specific part of their process or work area. We introduced this technique to our client by working with its Document Services team.

The team includes nearly 200 people and is responsible for handling the manual mail and putting information on the electronic workflow system.

For the RIE, we focused on the Pre-sort, Opening and the Manual and Retail Sortation areas. Five staff from the area and two facilitators took on the challenge of using Lean to improve their operation.

To begin, they reviewed the operation and identified five key opportunities for improvement: layout of the area; process improvements; visual controls; cheque process; and the Royal Mail Recorded & Special Delivery process.

Our approach

The approach adopted consisted of three phases:

Phase 1: Manager and team leader engagement

The Document Services Management team and local Team Leaders were trained in basic Lean principles and guided on their role within the blitz event. This was achieved in a workshop environment as well as individual guidance and coaching.

Phase 2: Team member lean training

The members of the Blitz team were trained in advance of the event in the principles of Lean and Lean problem solving tools and techniques. The training lasted one day and was a combination of classroom based theory and more practical, hands-on simulation activities.

Phase 3: Blitz event

The Blitz event lasted five days which allowed the team to

- Analyse the current state of their operation
- Identify improvement opportunities
- Develop the future state operation
- Implement some of the improvement ideas
- Present their findings and recommendations back to their senior management team

An immediate benefit was the team's experience in applying a range of tools and techniques for rapid improvement:

- 5 Day Lean Blitz
- Lean Training
- Value Stream Mapping
- Visual Management
- Quad of Aims
- Kanban
- Brainstorming
- 5 Why's
- Poka Yoke
- 5S

Value delivered

Impressive benefits realised for the organisation included:

Productivity Improvement:

- Elimination of excessive motion equal to 1 FTE
- Improved processes and layout for Retail Sortation equal to 2 FTE
- Improved processes, standardisation of working and utilisation of resources for initial sort and opening equal to 2 FTE
- Removal of duplication and elimination of non-value adding process for Retail/Manual Corporate Sort, Recorded & Special Deliveries equal to 0.3 FTE equivalent
- These FTE savings provided an overall productivity improvement of 15%

Additional Benefits

- Improved working environment using 5S process
- Improved visibility of work & clearer ways of working using visual management techniques
- Improved Health & Safety using 5S