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Traci Taylor, MBA
Operations Leader
(former Operations Manager)
Fortune 500 professional services firm

LABP Helps Firm Slash Processing Time for Data Requests

COMPANY: A Fortune 500 professional services firm with 27,000 associates worldwide. This firm’s data management teams are responsible for maintaining accurate and consistent information about clients across all the data systems used by the company, and for granting access to those systems to associates who need it.

CHALLENGE: Like many companies in the last decade, the firm experienced growing pains with data management as technology boomed and new information systems came online. Multiple teams had evolved to handle requests for data and for system access, and there was no centralized process for making those requests. Associates were often unsure where to start, frequently completing multiple requests containing the same information.

The result was a headache for managers and their team members. As many as 75% of all requests required multiple emails or calls to complete—sometimes up to 10 separate communications had to be sent to process a single request, taking up to 10 days total.

Operations manager Traci Taylor oversaw one group handling these requests. “The situation was constantly being brought to my attention,” she says. “If new colleagues needed to get trained on a system, they might get bounced around for a week or more before getting started. That’s hard on the new hire and on the team he or she works for. From a data perspective, we couldn’t get things totally accurate in our system right away because of all the back and forth going on for weeks. As a business, you don’t want to operate that way—you want to have a handle on your data.”

SOLUTION: Taylor, a graduate of the University of Tennessee’s Professional MBA program, returned to her alma mater to pursue her Lean Green Belt certification. She enrolled in the Office of Graduate and Executive Education Lean Applied to Business Processes (LABP), an intensive five-day classroom course that focuses on continuous process improvement and requires each participant to devise an action plan for improving a major process upon return to work.

“It was extremely intense—we covered so many things,” Taylor says. “Process mapping. SIPOC mapping. Discussions about what’s value-added. Root-cause analysis. Learning lean countermeasures. Identifying what waste really represented in dollars and time—that was key for me.”

Taylor started LABP with a few improvements in mind. “But by mid-week,” she says, “I had an aha moment about fixing the different touch points for data system access, and it took on a life of its own.” Taylor quickly realized she was on to something bigger: improving the request process for data correction and systems access across the entire United States, which represented a huge potential improvement in work flow.

“LABP really taught me not just to apply analytical tools to identify waste in a process, but also to take a step back and be innovative in creating the end state,” she says.

Taylor went back to the firm with an action plan in mind. Named co-leader of her project implementation team, Taylor...

- Created a standard, easy-to-understand online form that captured all required data based on request type and auto-routed the information to the appropriate party
- Collapsed email boxes for all data coordinators across the country into one mailbox and standardized the email folder structure
- Standardized the workflow for data coordinators

Taylor knew change could be difficult in a team environment, but the unwieldy process had been a pain point for so long, she was confident a solution would be well-received.



“I’m able to apply so many of the tools I learned in *Lean Applied to Business Processes* in my everyday work life—and I get more done than I ever thought possible.”

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RESULTS: The rollout of Taylor’s new system turned the old stat on its head: 95% of requests for data or systems access were now handled with a single request. And the time window shrank dramatically: from up to ten days for a single request to a maximum of three. With an average of 10 new hires per month each saving an average of five days, the result was 400 man-hours saved per month—plus a major improvement in data accuracy.

“Feedback was very positive,” Taylor says. (She has since accepted a new position with a sister company.) “Everybody was so glad not to have to worry anymore about who was handling a problem. The colleagues doing the work had much more flexibility—thanks to a standardized workflow, any group could pick up another group’s work in a pinch and get started without hesitating about what needed to be done.”

“These results are typical for course graduates that implement the LABP methodology,” says course creator and current faculty Bill Peterson. “Not only can they improve their process efficiency by more than 30%, but they become measurably more valuable to their organization.”

The results were so outstanding, in fact, that Taylor (who earned her Green Belt) intends to pursue her Six Sigma Black Belt at the University of Tennessee—and wow her new company with a project that boosts its bottom line.

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ABOUT LEAN APPLIED TO BUSINESS PROCESSES

Streamlining your business processes is the key to staying agile in the marketplace. In Lean Applied to Business Processes, we’ll show you how to apply the principles of continuous improvement to the administrative, service and transactional processes that make your organization run. Participants learn how to identify areas of waste, analyze solutions, and apply countermeasures to improve their organization’s performance in line with stated strategic initiatives.

If you’re interested in Lean Applied to Business Processes, please contact Peggy Jarrett at peggy.jarrett@utk.edu or +1 (865) 974-1616.

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