



Lean Learn Lead

Objectives

To conduct an end-to-end review of Distribution Operations to:

- Identify any process efficiencies to be made
- Identify any turnaround time improvements or actions to improve customer service for key customers
- Improve overall team performance in delivering outputs
- Create a future-proofed organisation

Strategy and Approach

Drawing from our trademarked approach, Lean, Learn, Lead™, we built on the strong base of Lean skills in the organisation and provided rigor and structure to the approach. We used tools such as SIPOC, (Supplier, Input, Process, Output, Customer) to map the key elements in each category, then derived which processes needed to be mapped. We used a combination of Rummler-Brache swim-lanes and Brown Papers to provide clear pictorial representation of all major processes. We did RAS (Random Activity Sampling) analysis, interviews with a diagonal cross section of staff, and a series of workshops (Launch, Process Mapping, Away Day analysis) to engage with wider project team members and staff overall.

We then undertook an organisational review to assess the 'soft skills' and behaviors of the first line supervisors. This yielded a number of issues, both around management style and its consistency, and the variation in culture across the business.

Our challenges across a broader front than the original tight 'Lean' remit meant that we developed a clear vision and purpose for the business in the medium term, which was beneficial in setting the 'trajectory' of efficiency savings in the near term.

Budget

£35k-£50k (£15k was retained for emergent work, of which we used £7k)

Results

We saved £270k of auditable costs on Quick Wins, with a further several £100k of other savings identified by streamlining the organisation. The project was overtaken by the announcement of a merger, so much of the savings were kept as 'latent' savings while the more strategic project considered the impact on staff numbers and structure.

The review took 3 months, up to the point of draft report, and recommendations were all accepted as part of the implementation plan or accepted but deferred pending the merger.

Evaluation

The Operations Director who commissioned the work was "delighted", as was our direct point of contact and Project Leader. The report highlights included:

- The Berkshire Review secured good staff engagement and a very significant amount of work across the end-to-end process

- Processes were found to be robust and well adhered to generally
- Quick Wins were identified in many areas, saving ~£270k pa
- The systems review of VL10 process (a system-to-system scheduling interface) review yielded the most in terms of turnaround time improvements and cost reduction through consolidation and re-scheduling of customer orders
- There was cultural misalignment between management and staff, with varied workforce engagement
- Performance regime metrics were tight but with a far looser management regime
- A vision for Distribution Operations has been created and is being refined

“Mike Robinson and his team came to Oxford University Press (Distribution Operations) to undertake a Lean review of the end to end fulfilment process. Mike quickly got up to speed with what is quite an unusual organisation and culture, and not only helped us to find lean savings which covered his fee several times over on an annual basis, but also challenged the senior team to look more strategically at its distribution operations. My view was that we ended up with very much more than we had expected from Berkshire, and we are now looking at our strategy, our key performance indicators, and the way we operate with our internal and external customers, all of which were an unexpected bonus coming out of the original brief.”

The OUP team Mike was involved with already had a good understanding of Lean, and Mike and his team worked with that, not repeating knowledge we already had, but giving us new tools where appropriate. I would happily use the team again.”

Andrea Wood – Head of Customer Services