

# IE Team Helps BSC Teams Achieve Surprising Results

In the first Kaizen Event held outside of Production, the Industrial Engineering (IE) team helped the Information Technologies (IT) Computer Support group achieve an eye-opening result: the average time it takes for computer equipment to be ordered, received and prepared for delivery to an employee was reduced from 16 days to 3 days – and some requests are now being filled the same day. No surprise, the IT group considered the exercise a resounding success, and well worth their time.

Since the organization placed emphasis on the importance of Lean Manufacturing and Business Process Improvement, the IE function has been an integral participant in the efforts to eliminate waste and increase the company's productivity and growth, particularly within the Production area.

Each area of Production has one or more dedicated engineers working full-time on reducing waste. "Production is close to having a sustainable lean culture," said John Wilson, Manager, IE. "You can feel it when you're out there. People understand what you're talking about, and they're getting to the point where they'll be able to run their own small projects." As a result, the IE team will continue to support Production, but their focus is now broadening to other operations, recently working with the Maple Grove IT team.

Jeff Johnson, IT Manager, explained how the IT Computer Support group prepared for its Kaizen Event. "We went through the exercise of mapping out our current state, identifying non-value-added activities and opportunities for improvement, and assigning goals and objectives to individuals to work on their pieces of the process." Next, they determined solutions and proceeded to implement as many as possible, and developed long-term goals and objectives to ensure the improvements are sustained.

As a result of the Kaizen, the IT Computer Support team implemented a bulk purchasing "Kanban" system for inventory, which is a system that triggers or signals replenishment for materials, parts, products, etc. The IT team set minimum and maximum inventory levels for each category of equipment purchased (desktops, laptops, peripherals, monitors, etc.), so there would always have enough inventory on hand to fill requests.

As a result of the Kaizen, the IT Team was able to reduce their average turnaround time from 16 days to 3 days. "We realized we could probably change what we were doing to reduce that time, but we were really surprised at how much we could change," says Jeff. "Having someone come in – an impartial set of eyes – to look at what you're doing and challenge you on it, really helps you cut the fat out. You can't do that on your own when you're stuck in the day-to-day routine."

Now that the IT Computer Support team has completed its Kaizen Event, a change has occurred in the way the team thinks about approaching things. "It wasn't a one-time event," Jeff said. "Now we can tell people 'continuous improvement' and they understand exactly what we mean. Now people are thinking, 'Here's what we're doing. How can we do it better?' When they see the value of what we gained out of that one event, the light bulb goes on in people's heads and they see how it can be used in other areas, too."

The IE team welcomes inquiries from any area of the company. If your team has a challenge or process you would like to improve, please contact John Wilson at 763-488-3207.



From left to right. Front row: Jim O'Keefe, Chris Boldt, Amanda North, John Wilson, Jenna Geason, Scott Fritz Middle row: Carrie McLees, Mark Geske, Randy Wahlstrom, Randy Collins, Christy Finger, Lana Larson Back row: Joe Drafall, Jeff Brown, Craig Swiecichowski, Joe Kelly, Matt Kouba Missing: Cassie Johnson