CASE STUDY

Staff Needed a Roadmap for Change
Value Stream Mapping

Organizations function in silos. It's understandable even if it's not desirable. The marketing people don't talk with the manufacturing people; the financial people don't talk with sales; operations are just trying to get the product out the door. It's the same in service organizations. When it comes to making changes in the organization, we don't know what others do. We don't often consider how changes we make in our areas impacts others. We need a roadmap—a way of visualizing how all of our processes fit together to serve our customers.

The Challenge:

A hospital's customer satisfaction scores were going down for their outpatient services. It seemed like a straight-forward issue until they really took a look at the problem. One of the first activities completed was a Value Stream Map. The results were eye-opening! Patient delays were identified at three separate locations. The Value Stream Map identified two units where registration was handled for outpatients instead of in the more traditional registration unit. Understanding the players in this situation resulted in the hospital making appropriate changes to its process. Had the team acted on their first instincts, the results would have been quite different. Consider these steps:

1. **Select the appropriate team members.**
   Create cross-functional teams—include the process owners and those who are upstream and down stream of the process you are analyzing.

2. **Identify the process to be analyzed.**
   It is sometimes difficult to limit the scope of your analysis. Where to start? Where does the process end? What is the "theme" or purpose of the process you are analyzing? For example, you might look at the flow of information from the time a patient calls for an appointment through the discharge process. Or, you might look at the flow of material through your production process from the supplier through delivery to the customer.

3. **Document the value stream.**
   Value Stream Maps are most often created using a pencil and paper. The objective of this exercise is to document all of the value-added and non-value-added activities as they are currently occurring (Current State). Once the current state map is created, problem-solving activities are used to identify areas to focus your organization's improvement efforts. A second Value Stream Map is developed to show how these improvements will change the organization (the Future State). Value Stream Maps should be posted on a wall or published so that you receive input from everyone in the organization.

As a result of this project:
- A 5-Day Rapid Improvement Event (Kaizen) was held at the hospital which addressed one of the elements identified in the Value Stream Map.

- Weekly Gallup Survey scores moved to acceptable levels.

- The hospital committed to implementing additional LEAN improvements in other areas of the hospital.

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