

Out of this World KAIZEN™!

From a child watching news reports of rocket, then shuttle launches and an occasional episode of I dream of Jeannie, I had long thought about working at NASA. NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the original U.S. government's pinnacle science and technology arm that put a man on the moon.

Fast forward to June 2016, when Kaizen Institute started to assist NASA Ames Research Center in California to aid them in improving how they go about creating and delivering Partnerships. Partnerships of all varieties; with universities, private companies, and other governments just to name a few. Like many of our clients, NASA's mission has evolved and with that how they go about conducting business needs to evolve to continue to make it as effective for them and their partners. So it was decided early on by internal sponsors that given the wide range of activities and complexity of services that a value stream analysis would best to provide the insights for change.

The value stream mapping exercise was scheduled for a five-day mapping event followed by an additional ten days of on-site support for multiple KAIZEN™ events. The first week included about four hours of specially developed content on lean fundamentals where twenty-five participants were exposed to the core themes of value, waste, origin of TPS and linkage to process control. Secondly, the team scribed their own VSM charter where they put to paper the many issues related to partnerships. The current state map including data collection took about 12 hours with another 2 for waste identification.

From there the team eagerly shifted to future state discussion. The method utilized for future state work was not to facilitate the team during design, but offer key direction, specified content and timeframes for the team to create a challenging but feasible design while coming to consensus. The action plan was then summarily completed which as with nearly every service stream, included a broad mix of easy process improvements along with some very challenging structural changes the team identified as critical and necessary.

The contrast between current state and the projected future state stream performance identified a potential 49% improvement in overall lead-time. Potential financial impacts were not specified by the sponsor and senior member of partnerships; however discussion revealed that increasing the volume of partnerships at Ames would easily be measured in millions of dollars annually aside from many quality of service improvements and more effective use of the many specialized talents required.

The team did a great job finely combing through their own data, objectively discussing and putting to action KAIZEN™ improvements that will make NASA partnerships easier, better and faster for all people involved. The remaining KAIZEN™ events are scheduled for blast off in 2017.

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