



Leaning Forward

The Official Newsletter of Lean and Innovative Thinking for the City of Baltimore

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Editor: Amy Costanzo

Highlights

- 2014 recap and 2015 preview of Lean and other innovative activities
- Overview of the City's latest Lean event, fire permit inspections
- An interview with a Lean champion
- A look at the City's off-street parking project
- Lean training class descriptions and dates
- Announcing the City's first crowdfunding campaign

In this issue:

New Year, New Focus: Spreading the Word About Lean	1
Fireproofing the Process: Leaning Fire Permit Inspections	2
Special Feature: Interview with Lean champion Gerald Grimes	3
Upcoming Events	3
Upcoming Lean Training	4
Innovation Spotlight	4
Lightbulb Thought	5

New Year, New Focus: Spreading the Word About Lean



2014 was a huge year for Lean within the City of Baltimore. Three successful pilot Lean events were held, Cabinet members received introductory Lean training, and the Lean training program for employees began. Lean has garnered support and praise from many, including the Mayor of Baltimore who encouraged agency heads to submit ideas for processes to be Leaned.

The momentum for Lean is so great that the City has created a Lean program entitled Baltimore Lean, Improvement, and Forward Thinking (L.I.F.T.) to oversee all Lean events and training for the City. Housed within BBMR, Baltimore L.I.F.T. will coordinate and plan Lean training classes, coordinate with Lean facilitators to hold future events, monitor the results of each Lean event, and create publications, presentations, and other materials to encourage the spread of Lean throughout the City.

This year, Lean is off to a great start. In February, the Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD) participated in a Lean event to improve its fire permit inspection process. This event, featured on page 2, led to some impressive results that are aimed at providing customers their permits within 30 days of payment. More Lean events are currently in the process of being planned for 2015; the next Lean event, scheduled for March, will look at the Liquor Board inspection process.

In addition to more events, there is ongoing training for City employees! Since November 2014, over 120 City employees have received beginner training for Lean Government. There are currently ten more beginner classes, one intermediate class, and one advanced class scheduled for 2015 with more soon to be added. With each level of the classes, students learn more about the concepts and tools Lean uses to make improvements. The final level is designed to prepare students to become certified Lean facilitators for the City, thus striving towards the goal of sustainability for which Lean is built. More details on Lean training can be found on page 4.

Perfecting Processes Essential to Operations: Leaning Fire Permit Inspections

The City's fire permit inspection process—the process by which a business or commercial residential facility obtains a fire permit in order to operate—is a process that lives within the Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD), but is supported by other agencies, such as the Mayor's Office of Information Technology (MOIT). The biggest issues were the amount of time it took for a customer to receive their permit after they had paid for it and the process by which inspections were conducted.

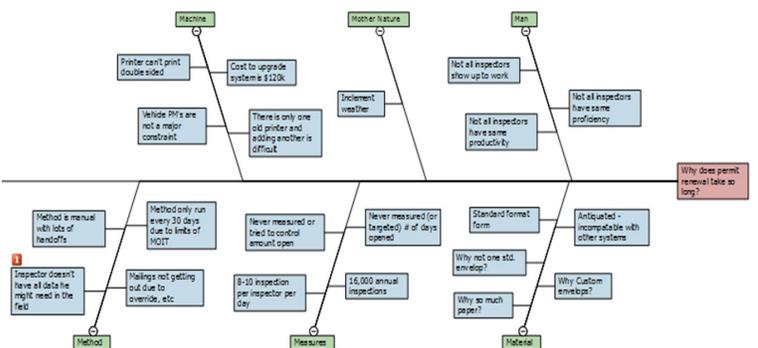
Before the event took place, data was collected to set a baseline for the time between payment and receipt of a permit. The data that was collected, which was for the time period between December 15, 2013 and December 15, 2014, showed gaps in information and some of the information was suspect and had to be discarded. From the remaining data, it was found that the average time it takes to get a customer their permit is 34 days—over a month. Approximately 40% of all inspections took over 30 days to complete. Additionally, it was discovered that some inspectors were not entering data correctly because they had not been properly trained on the 3270 system, the system used to track inspections. Inspectors were also spending up to 50% of their time doing administrative tasks instead of completing inspections. Other issues included too much manual work for permits to be mailed out, lack of proper training for conducting inspections, and a high rate absenteeism.



In January, staff from BCFD, MOIT, and the Department of Finance gathered in the Innovation Lab for four days to examine and “lean” the fire permit inspection process. The event was facilitated by Lynn Clark of Global Productivity Solutions. Prior to the event, the participants had attended four hours of Lean beginner training provided by the City. Once the event began, the team quickly identified several issues that were adding time and work to the day of inspectors. One such issue was the way the envelopes the permits were mailed in were formatted—the configuration of the window block was incorrect, causing massive amounts of returned mail to BCFD.

Another issue was that renewal notices were not automatically generated; a captain had to tell the system to generate them. It became apparent that technological solutions could eliminate these problems, and MOIT offered its reprogramming services to help. A representative from the print shop also offered to have the permits printed in batches there, then sent out to mail from the post office, thus eliminating the printing of single permits and the need for BCFD personnel to physically stuff envelopes and carry them to the post office to be mailed. A solution to provide a “temporary” permit to customers while they waited for their official permit to arrive also was devised—fire inspectors will now take a picture of the checked “approved” box on an inspection form and email it to the customer, providing them with proof of having passed inspection so they can continue operations. Several personnel matters were also addressed. One of the matters, high absenteeism, is now going to be addressed through the establishment of an attendance committee to monitor attendance. Additionally, more training on the 3270 system is going to be provided to reduce gaps in data.

In February 2015, the fire permit inspection team will reconvene to evaluate the progress and address any challenges to implementation.



See the fire permit inspection process report out video on BBMR's website at:
<http://bbmr.baltimorecity.gov/LeanGovernment/LeanEvents>

Interview with Lean champion Gerald Grimes

When Gerald Grimes, the director of the Northwest One-Stop Career Center, was informed that his center's processes were inefficient, he was admittedly less than enthused. But through the Lean process, he was able to help make these processes more robust and build a better way to help residents in search of a job. Gerald is now a strong supporter of Lean. In this interview, he shares his experience with Lean and why it is a great tool for improvement.



Q: How did you feel about Lean when the idea was first introduced to you?

A: When our Director told Senior Staff that the mayor was interested in piloting a process improvement initiative, I was curious and enthused about any system that could assist me to better serve our customers. So I submitted to the Director that I could use assistance improving customer flow at my center. The idea was accepted and we began working with the consultants. I will admit, at this point, I became very defensive because I felt that what the processes we designed were good, but now I have people pointing out processes that we built were inefficient. They actually called them "wastes."

Q: What is your opinion of Lean now?

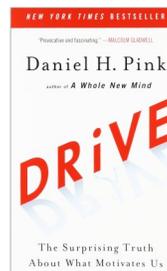
A: I'm a convert! You know the expression "work smarter, not harder," well, Lean has taught us just how to do that. After learning and applying Lean principles in my center, I now have a Lean mindset. I can't look at processes the same way I used to. Lean has definitely elevated my operational and managerial expertise.

Q: How has Lean changed the culture of your workplace? Have you noticed any positive changes amongst your customers or your staff?

A: Indeed it has. Our customers are very appreciative that they don't have to wait so long to get services, so customer satisfaction has improved. Staff morale and attitudes have become more positive because changes were not imposed on them, on the contrary, they thought of and initiated changes that they knew should happen as they are the ones doing the work.

Our next Good Government Book Club selection is *Drive* by Daniel H. Pink. It addresses the things that motivate people and how to master them in order to optimize performance in the workplace. Please join us on Wednesday, February 25th at 12pm in the Innovation Lab (located at 201 East Baltimore Street on the 2nd Floor—HR Training Division) for a discussion about the book.

Dessert will be served! If you have any questions, please contact Amy Costanzo at amy.costanzo@baltimorecity.gov



Q: Please tell me what you think the top three benefits of Lean are.

A: In a human services environment, process efficiency benefits both staff (they feel more valued) and customers (satisfaction with service delivery). Lean develops in staff a continuous improvement mindset. Lean is a very good tool for helping staff to embrace a change.

Q: Please tell me how the other MOED career centers have implemented Lean.

A: We had such great success with Lean, that it was decided to implement a Lean case management event for our entire division. Staff from our other One Stop (Eastside Career Center), our TANF operation (the Workforce Reception Center) our HR department and our Performance, Evaluation and Data Systems (PEDS) unit comprised the team. The Lean process was used to ensure uniformity in processes and forms across the division to ensure that all customer folders would meet Department of Labor audit standards.

Q: What advice would you give to an employer who wants to bring Lean to their workplace?

A: My advice would be to go into it with an open mind. The system is designed to increase a business' profitability by lowering costs and making production more efficient. Leave egos and top-down management styles behind. And, as solutions come from the people who do the work every day, the workforce is more motivated, so be prepared to acknowledge their contributions.

- Lean Beginner Training: February 18
- Good Government Book Club Meeting: February 25
- Lean Beginner Training: March 2, 18, and 30
- Lean Intermediate Training: April 13-14

Upcoming
Events



Upcoming Lean Training

Baltimore L.I.F.T. is pleased to announce several more Lean training sessions coming up! Training is open and free to all City employees!

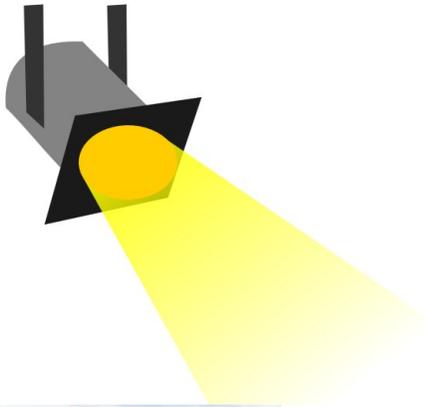
Beginner (4 hours)—includes an overview of Lean philosophy, strategies, and examples of practical applications.

Intermediate (16 hours)— includes a more in depth look at Lean tools. Participants will be required to complete a Lean project within their workplace and report on results to the group six weeks later. Completion of beginner training is required. 16 hours.

Advanced (32 hours) - includes preparation to become a Lean certified facilitator. Participants will co-facilitate several Lean events. Completion of beginner and intermediate training is required and students will be selected by application.

**To sign up for Lean training, please use the Signup Genius link located on the BBMR homepage:
<http://bbmr.baltimorecity.gov/Home.aspx>**

Innovation Spotlight: Off-Street Parking



In FY2014, the Parking Authority of Baltimore City (PABC) was awarded \$381,000 to upgrade several off-street parking lots. The lots were in various states of disrepair—pavement was cracked, lighting was poor, spaces were not clearly defined, and there was nothing to attract monthly parking contract holders to utilize them. Additionally, most of them were underpriced for their location and value. PABC embarked on a series of improvements, such as installing new “smart” meters, installing better lighting fixtures, resurfacing pavement, and installing proper fencing. Monthly parking fees were also adjusted to reflect the value of the newly improved lots. To date, this project has repaid \$32,000 of its Innovation Fund loan and is on track to have it repaid within the allotted time.

Photos—Left: before improvements. Below: after improvements.





Light Bulb Thought



Each issue of Leaning Forward will contain a Light Bulb Thought—something to provoke thinking along the line of innovating, improving, and progressing. This issue’s Light Bulb Thought is adapted from “The Eight Pillars of Innovation” by Susan Wojcicki, a Senior VP of Advertising at Google.

HAVE A MISSION THAT MATTERS

Work can be more than a job when it stands for something you care about. Google’s mission is to ‘organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.’ We use this simple statement to guide all of our decisions.

THINK BIG BUT START SMALL

No matter how ambitious the plan, you have to roll up your sleeves and start somewhere. Google Books, which has brought the content of millions of books online, was an idea that our founder, Larry Page, had for a long time. People thought it was too crazy even to try, but he went ahead and bought a scanner and hooked it up in his office. He began scanning pages, timed how long it took with a metronome, ran the numbers and realized it would be possible to bring the world’s books online. Today, our Book Search index contains over 10 million books.

STRIVE FOR CONTINUAL INNOVATION, NOT INSTANT PERFECTION

The best part of working on the web? We get do-overs. Lots of them. The first version of AdWords, released in 1999, wasn’t very successful – almost no one clicked on the ads. Not many people remember that because we kept iterating and eventually reached the model we have today. And we’re still improving it.

LOOK FOR IDEAS EVERYWHERE

As the leader of our Ads products, I want to hear ideas from everyone – and that includes our partners, advertisers and all of the people on my team. I also want to be a part of the conversations Googlers are having in the hallways.

SHARE EVERYTHING

By sharing everything, you encourage the discussion, exchange and re-interpretation of ideas, which can lead to unexpected and innovative outcomes. We try to facilitate this by working in small, crowded teams in open cube arrangements, rather than individual offices.

SPARK WITH IMAGINATION, FUEL WITH DATA

What begins with intuition is fueled by insights. If you’re lucky, these reinforce one another. For a while the number of Google search results displayed on a page was 10 simply because our founders thought that was the best number. We eventually did a test, asking users, ‘Would you like 10, 20 or 30 search results on one page?’ They unanimously said they wanted 30. But 10 results did far better in actual user tests, because the page loaded faster. It turns out that providing 30 results was 20 percent slower than providing 10, and what users really wanted was speed. That’s the beautiful thing about data – it can either back up your instincts or prove them totally wrong.

BE A PLATFORM

There is so much awe-inspiring innovation being driven by people all over the globe. That’s why we believe so strongly in the power of open technologies. They enable anyone, anywhere, to apply their unique skills, perspectives and passions to the creation of new products and features on top of our platforms.

NEVER FAIL TO FAIL

Our growing Google workforce comes to us from all over the world, bringing with them vastly different experiences and backgrounds. A set of strong common principles for a company makes it possible for all its employees to work as one and move forward together. We just need to continue to say ‘yes’ and resist a culture of ‘no’, accept the inevitability of failures, and continue iterating until we get things right.