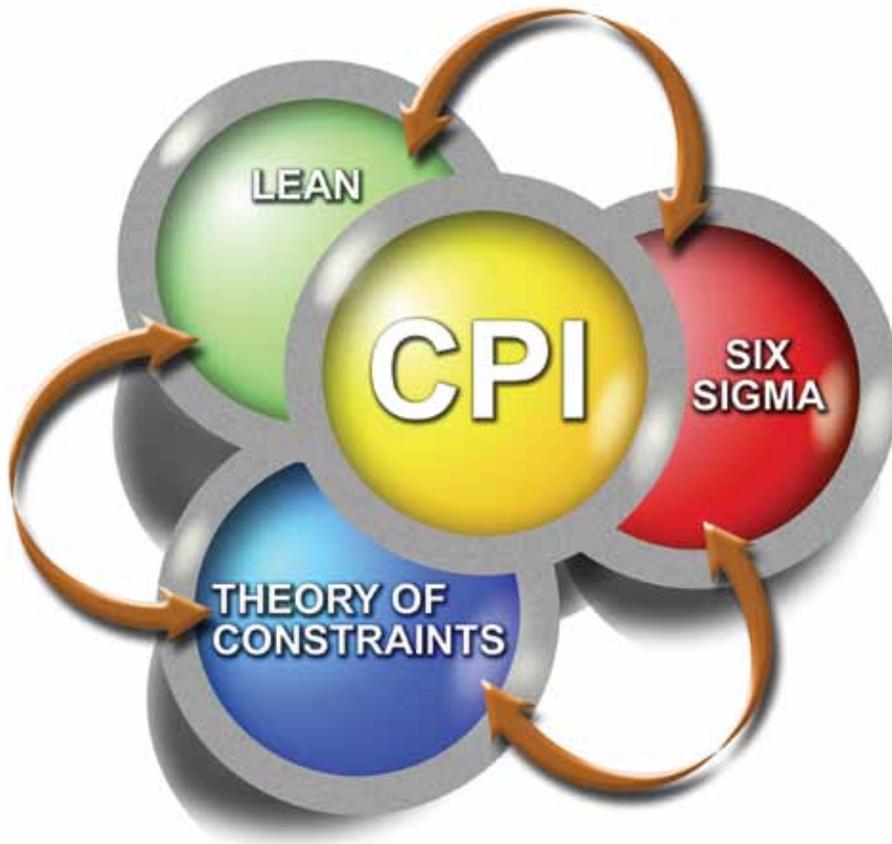


Continuous Process Improvement: *Faster, Better, Efficient*

By Mark Woodbury | DCMA Public Affairs



The Defense Contract Management Agency's Continuous Process Improvement model shows the three core methodologies used to generate CPI.

If a person is looking for just another employee to continue to do what has “always been done around here,” they will never find them at the Defense Contract Management Agency. The agency’s staff at the Continuous Process Improvement office know how to challenge the “business as usual” approach. They do this by helping others look at the norm and see how to make it faster, better and more efficient.

According to the office’s philosophy and vision statement, they ensure agency performance is not just sustained, but that it is also regularly reviewed and considered for improvement in a structured and documented manner. They also strive to embed this culture of

continuous improvement into the agency’s day-to-day activities.

This vision became reality when CPI office members assisted two recent projects in separate contract management offices. The first involved management requirements within the government vehicle program. The second project involved the difficulty in meeting acquisition personnel’s Continuous Learning Points biennial requirements.

Government Vehicles

When James Strother was notified of the challenge to get the DCMA St. Louis’ government vehicle program in compliance with the requirement that 80 percent of all government vehicles be driven a minimum of 750 miles a month,

Did you know?

The Defense Contract Management Agency Continuous Process Improvement Office uses three core methodologies to help personnel in the agency accomplish a more efficient and faster outcome.

Lean

To eliminate non-value activities

- Identify the value stream
- Eliminate over production
- Eliminate over-processing
- Create the process flow
- Create pull system

Six Sigma

To reduce process variation

- Consistent repeatable processes
- Process design/redesign
- Defect prevention
- Statistical analysis
- Voice of the customer

Theory of Constraints

To reduce process constraints

- Identify the constraint
- Exploit the constraint
- Subordinate to the constraint
- Elevate the system’s constraint
- Repeat step one (the constraint has probably moved)



From left: Sharlee Lebreque, Chris Knaggs and James Stamper make up the Defense Contract Management Agency's Continuous Process Improvement office. The office trains personnel to use the Lean, Six Sigma and Theory of Constraints methodologies to better work processes throughout the agency.

he immediately thought of getting help from the CPI office.

"I was always interested in being part of, and seeing how, the Lean Six Sigma project process worked within the agency," said Strother. "Naturally, this seemed to be a perfect opportunity to accomplish the requirement through the assistance of the LSS processes."

He reached out to the CPI office and explained the project's goal. The team then asked questions to ensure the project's validity. Once validated, Strother and his project team were assigned an LSS Black Belt, Chris Knaggs, to mentor the team through the various parts of the project.

"Knaggs' help was invaluable," said Strother. "Whenever I had an issue, he was there to help. Without his help I may still be fighting with the LSS reporting program, 'Power Steering.'"

After discussing the current government vehicle tracking and scheduling system, the team determined that a better way to manage and track usage would be to implement Microsoft Outlook calendars for the vehicles. This change permitted both easier vehicle scheduling and usage tracking. At the same time, the team also determined to implement a quarterly usage and mileage meeting.

While reviewing the quarterly numbers, it became clear there were simply too

many vehicles at the location. Over a 10-month period, never once were all nine vehicles at the location all in use on a single day. According to Strother, once this information was documented, everyone could see that too many government vehicles were at the location.

Because of the steps implemented as a result of the team's recommendations, the office has: seen an immediate decrease in operating costs, maintained full vehicle availability and gotten the remaining vehicles over or near the 750 mile monthly requirement.

Although the project started as a review of DCMA St. Louis' government vehicle usage, after the office shared the results to DCMA Chicago Army Col. Jose Baez and his deputy, Joe Vernon, they requested the team also take a look at their office's government vehicle usage. After analyzing their usage, the team determined some of their vehicles should be turned back into the U.S. General Services Administration, while others could be moved to different locations. Strother said the initial review of the changes was positive, but a second review for the Chicago office is scheduled for March to ensure effective use.

Knaggs said it is always exciting to see when a team's efforts meet the intended need. However, it is even more exciting when a team's results get attention from others and expanded across a particular

region and, even sometimes, throughout the entire agency.

Continuous Learning Points

James Callihan had the difficult task of assisting DCMA St. Petersburg acquisition personnel in meeting their 80 continuous learning points every two years requirement. Callihan and his team came up with a program, using the CPI methods, to help the CMO progress toward 100 percent compliance.

Callihan reached out to the CPI office and explained the goal of his team's project. Once again, the CPI office then validated the project and assigned an LSS Master Black Belt, James Stamper, as the team's mentor. Callihan said he appreciated Stamper's mentorship during the project and welcomed his approach to helping the team stay pointed in "the right direction."

"I think true leadership encourages the mentee to research the answers by pointing them in the right direction. Mr. Stamper did just that," said Callihan. "He answered my questions by rephrasing them and then pointing me in the right direction. He enabled me to continue the learning process outside of the classroom. He challenged me by forcing me to answer my own questions."

Callihan said another important lesson Stamper taught, that led to the team's overall success, was that the best leaders are also the best facilitators. "A project is only as successful as the team, and I had a great one," Callihan said. "I merely helped steer the team and keep everything on task, but the suggestions we made were generated by a collaborative effort."

Using the LSS process, the team identified any non-value added activity and process variations and developed real solutions to mitigate the issues.

Did you know?

The Defense Contract Management Agency has 20 certified black belts and 110 certified green belts.

Information current as of Jan. 31

“If a contract management office does not have someone who has been through the Continuous Process Improvement office’s training, I would recommend the CMO take advantage of the training the office provides.”

— James Callihan, Defense Contract Management Agency St. Petersburg

First, the team set up basic training for everyone at the office to explain the training requirements and what classes counted toward the requirements. The team then went through the electronic Individual Development Plan process to ensure personnel there had the requirement counting classes on their e-IDPs. Lastly, the team implemented routine progress checks with personnel who had the requirement to assist them with meeting it.

Because of the team’s efforts, DCMA St. Petersburg has seen an immediate improvement in its compliance rating. These simple ideas spread throughout the agency, and other offices have implemented similar training and checks to assist personnel in meeting this standard.

High Marks

Having both led projects and seeing the benefits and savings that occur as a result of their team’s recommendations, Strother and Callihan say they strongly encourage others in the agency reach out to DCMA’s CPI office for assistance.

“If a CMO does not have someone who has been through the CPI office’s training, I would recommend the CMO take advantage of the training the office provides,” said Callihan. “Not to sound cliché, but it is better to learn how to fish versus being fed for the day.”

Personnel who are interested in starting a project or have further questions about the CPI implantation process should send an email to the team at CPI-LSSInbox@dcma.mil. Information is also available on the CPI office’s webpage found on DCMA’s internal homepage under “Quicklinks.” 



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