

## **Streamlining the Command Check-in Process**

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### **Introduction**

The command check-in process took an average of 8.4 days to complete and there was no process in place for the Receipts and Transfers Division to verify the check-in process had been completed by a newly arriving staff member prior to them initiating work. The check-in process was logistically confusing, cumbersome, and challenging to complete efficiently. There were four categories of staff members each with a different check-in process. Military officers had one process, enlisted staff members had a second process, Government Service (GS) employees had a third check-in process and contract personnel had a 4<sup>th</sup> process. Numerous negative customer comments were received from staff members unhappy with the process.

A Lean Six Sigma (LSS) Project was chartered by the Command Director for Administration (DFA) with the backing of the full Executive Steering Committee. A team consisting of members from every area involved in the check-in process was assembled. The project began with the goal of increasing efficiency, ensuring compliance and decreasing redundancies and non-value added check-in points to minimize the number of steps. It was believed that a more efficient check-in process would enable new staff members to begin working in their primary position with assurances that all requirements had been met. The team also believed that an improved process would give new staff members a more favorable view of the required process.

Each of the four check-in processes were analyzed for the number of stops required. The military officers' process had 19 stops required, the enlisted staff members' process had 18 required stops, the GS staff members' process had 15 stops and the contractor's process only had 8 required stops. Data was gathered to form a baseline of the average number of days required to return a completed check-in sheet for each of the four staff member categories.

The average number of days required for each category of employee to return their check-in sheet was obtained. The military officer averaged 10.78 days, enlisted members averaged 13.67 days, GS personnel averaged 2.57 days and contract employees averaged 3.41 days. All four categories of employees' together averaged 8.42 days to return their check-in sheet. The 8.42 days was used as a baseline average at the beginning of the project.

At the beginning of the process the distance traveled by each of the four groups of employees was measured with the goal of reducing the distance during the project. It was discovered that

they military officers traveled 17,337 feet (3.28 miles) during the check-in process. Enlisted members traveled 14,447 feet (2.7 miles), GS employees traveled 11,041 feet (2.09 miles) and contract employees traveled 10,419 feet (1.97 miles).

## **Methods**

The committee members met once a week and used LSS methodology and tools to define, measure and improve the process. Staff members from twenty eight divisions involved in the original check-in process were included on the team. Since none of the current processes required steps to be performed in any mandatory order, the team decided to use circle diagrams to help define the current process. The circle diagrams were used in place of the traditional process maps. This allowed the team to view the process without assuming any particular order would be used by any staff member. A circle diagram was constructed for each of the four categories of staff members.

Team members also developed a map of the processes suppliers, inputs, process, outputs and customers (SIPOC). This helped the team identify the key stakeholders in the process. Next the team members developed a Critical to Quality (CTQ) Tree. The CTQ Tree identified three critical needs for a process to be successful. First, the process needed access to Information Technology Management Department (ITMD) systems. Second, the check-in process needed to be accurate and efficient. Third, the process needed timely and complete Personnel Support Division (PSD) and Human Resources (HR) functions. The team then identified drivers for the three needs and the CTQ's required for all of the needs to be satisfied.

Data was collect over a two month period by measuring the number of feet traveled starting from the Receipts and Transfers Division and continuing to all required stops on the original check-in sheet, for all categories of staff members, using a roller wheel to measure distances between stops. Additional data was collected on the number of days it took to return the completed check-in sheet to the Receipts and Transfer Division after initial start of the check-in process. A total of 113 check-in sheets were included in the data.

After the team analysis, the DFA was briefed and approved of the teams plans for improvement. A total of 6 redundant stops were eliminated from the four different check-in processes. Numerous interventions were enacted to improve the process. A website was created to post all incoming active duty military members' orders. This provided Medical Staff Services with the ability to begin the credentialing process well ahead of the member arriving or departing the command.

The check-in sheet was updated to reflect more accurate information on location and hours of required stops on the check-in sheet. In addition, a SharePoint site was established and a weekly Manpower Distribution Report, allowing departments to track the progress of newly arriving personnel's check-in process, was published.

## **Results**

The changes implemented by the team resulted in reducing the check-in process travel distance for military officers by 1.03 miles, enlisted military members by 0.42 miles, GS employees by 0.12 miles. The distance traveled by contract personnel was unchanged. Post intervention data was collected on the time to return the check-in sheets on 55 personnel with a resulting mean of 4.56 days. This was a reduction of 3.86 days. The range was reduced to 14 days from 57 day pre-intervention.

A control plan was implemented to ensure that the improvements were sustained. The control plan resulted in a process to continue to monitor the check-in sheet return rate. Five days was established as a trigger point for action. If a check-in sheet was not returned within that time period the staff member and department were notified of the delinquency.

In addition to the quantifiable results, newly arriving staff members report the process is a smooth and uncomplicated requirement.

## **Conclusion**

Six month after project completion the gains and improvements are being sustained. Although the initial goal of less than two days to complete the check-in process was not reached, the mean completion time in days remains consistently less than four days. This maintains a process that requires 4 days less than the initial baseline check-in sheet return rate of 8.4 days.

A spin-off project is now well underway to improve the check-out process based on the success of the check-in improvements.

Additional improvements have been made to the check-in sheets. There is now one consolidated check-in sheet for the command that is organized according to physical location. Now all locations in one location are listed together.

## **Disclaimer**

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