

BREAKTHROUGH FOR DATA MANAGEMENT CASE STUDY

Managing Big Data the Lean Way

Behind any company whose livelihood depends on managing massive databases of information there are often burdensome manual updating processes prone to creating backlogs and increased stress on data management staff. However, the leading U.S. supplier of contract materials and equipment pricing to healthcare facilities discovered a better way to get on top of the big data updating challenge. The approach: Engage its people in Lean process redesign using a team engagement method uniquely suited to their data-intensive work environment.

Novation helps thousands of hospitals and other healthcare facilities save millions of dollars through its ability to pool demand and achieve better pricing on countless medical materials and supplies.

One of the keys to Novation's ability to manage the enormous size and complexity of the hospital supply chain is its dynamic database that houses up-to-date product options as well as pricing and availability for Novation member hospitals. Maintaining this immense database is the job of Dave Turner, Novation's Director of Data Management, and his team of Database Analysts.

Faced with the need to streamline the process for updating Novation's Product Master Database in anticipation of accelerated product and pricing changes, Turner thought back to his prior experience at Boeing and the success they had using Lean Kaizen Events. However, Turner recognized that unlike his experience with aircraft manufacturing operations, he was now leading a team of pure knowledge workers and reliant on people's experience and proficiency in front of desktop screens.

Lean Improvement Tailored to Knowledge Work Environments

Turner turned to Leap Technologies and its innovative **Breakthrough** approach to Lean process redesign for assistance. Breakthrough integrates the proven lessons and methods of Lean into an action-learning experience uniquely suited to knowledge worker environments where work processes are difficult to visualize, let alone improve.



Data Management
Made Easy with
Breakthrough



30-50%

improvement cycle-times for
updating product prices

8

Lean process improvements
implemented

9

employees engaged

90 days

from team launch to
completion

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According to Turner, “I wanted my team to apply Lean methods and tools to our process for updating Master Data, but I was wary about confusing them with theory and examples not relevant to our knowledge work environment. Leap’s approach fit my belief that our staff needed to be “pulled vs. pushed” into discovering how to streamline work that we were finding increasingly difficult to accomplish on schedule with current staffing levels.”

Team Engagement in a Lean Innovation Laboratory

With the decision to move forward, Leap worked with Turner to plan and facilitate a Breakthrough project designed to streamline cycle-time and reduce the work burden associated with making hundreds of database updates on a continuous basis.

The effort launched with interviews with process stakeholders to capture the voice of process customers as well as process “doers.” This incoming perception data was critical to shaping the design of the following four-day Breakthrough Workshop. Similar to a Lean Kaizen Event, the workshop brought together the entire Product Master Data Team to examine the current “As-Is” process and then brainstorm a new “To Be” process using Lean thinking.

Because “white space” processes are difficult to see and often defy classic application of Lean concepts, the Breakthrough approach engaged Novation workshop participants in a simulation-based learning laboratory to uncover process constraints and stimulate process stakeholders to think in different terms about their work approach.

Immediate Results from Lean Innovations

Through simulation and process analysis generated in the Breakthrough Workshop, the Product Master Update Team discovered several Lean solutions for saving time and balancing workloads, including:

- Installing a “hard-check” on the quality and completeness of incoming data from suppliers.
- Segmenting work streams (refresh vs. moderate vs. deep clean updates) and standardizing the process for each type of update with standard cycle-times and staff hours required for completion.
- Creating a Master Schedule based on standard hours for processing different types of updates in order to ensure faster and more predictable refreshing of data based on spend-level and velocity of change.
- Building a document storage system to speed access to critical information including a Supplier Catalogue Library.
- Developing a standard Data Analyst training and certification program to ensure equivalency in skills and knowledge.



20+
YEARS EXPERIENCE

100+
CLIENT USERS

250+
BREAKTHROUGH PROJECTS
COMPLETED

500+
LEADERS AND
EMPLOYEES ENGAGED

\$250M
SAVINGS PRODUCED

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As one data analyst from the team remarked, “Some of the solutions we identified were ideas we’ve had in our heads for a long time. But others, like the team-based approach to updating categories of data, were truly revolutionary for us.”

The experience of Novation’s Product Master Data Team reflects Leap’s experience about the power of unleashing employee know-how and creativity to speed process innovation. Early and broad engagement of key stakeholders combined with simple-to-use tools and concepts drives faster results.

Reduced Cycle-Times for Data Updating and Greater Teamwork

The shift to a team-based Lean work process allowed Turner and his team to reduce the average cycle-times for completing updates from 30% to as high as 50%. The results: more data analyst time available for other higher value activities, faster access to updated information for customers and less staff stress.

“While we always thought of ourselves as a cohesive team, our work process didn’t support those values. Now we have a process in place that not only produces better results, it aligns with our values.”

According to Turner, the other as-important benefit of the Breakthrough approach was the installation of a process developed (with full staff participation) that promotes teamwork, cooperation and shared goals. As Turner noted, “While we always thought of ourselves as a cohesive team, our work process didn’t support those values. Now we have a process in place that not only produces better results, it aligns with our values.”

The “DNA” of Faster Improvement



Simplify the change process to engage more people.



Use “sprint” timeframes to keep employees motivated.



Empower employees with clear direction and support their ideas.



Use teams to build confidence and accountability for action.



Celebrate completions, not activity.

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The “All in One” Team Engagement Toolkit for Rapid Process Innovation



Prelaunch Planner



Action Accelerator



Scripted Meeting Guides



Quick Read Booklets



Idea Sorting, Prioritizing and Tracking Posters



e-Templates & Tools



LEARN MORE ABOUT BREAKTHROUGH

Are you looking for a better and faster way to redesign and innovate complex, cross-functional processes?



Call 800.254.6805 or email to request@improvefaster.com to schedule a demo of the Breakthrough Toolkit.



For more information including Case Studies and White Papers please visit www.improvefaster.com.

Leap Technologies

Improve faster through better team engagement!

For more than two decades, Leap Technologies has equipped leaders across industries and disciplines to achieve faster results through a simple, but often under-appreciated differentiator: Effective Team Engagement.

More than 500 organizations and more than 10,000 teams have applied Leap toolkits and roadmaps to build capability at every organization level to manage change, improve processes, and speed execution through teams.

Whether deploying an organization-wide Lean improvement initiative, installing a new technology platform or simply looking to boost employee engagement and develop better leaders, Leap Technologies empowers its clients to “get better, faster” through effective team engagement.