

Monday, May 10, 2010

Michigan Lean Consortium event at DTE teaches Lean leadership

The Michigan Lean Consortium (MLC), along with the Oakland University Pawley Lean Institute, recently hosted a benchmarking event at DTE Energy in Detroit. The focus of this event was on the role of leadership in a continuous improvement culture.

DTE Energy recently won the best improvement program in 2009 from the International Quality and Productivity Center (IQPC).

There was a question and answer panel discussion with the DTE Energy leadership, including Gerry Anderson, president and chief operating officer; David Meador, executive vice president and chief financial officer; and Jason Schulist, director of Continuous Improvement.

Anderson said that in order to incorporate a Lean culture, people must remember that employee engagement is the heart of leadership and to dimension the problem.

Meador said drive time, work scheduling process and customer satisfaction are all initiatives that have contributed to the financial improvements at DTE Energy. He also advised the attendees to always keep in mind what "true north" is for their organizations.

"If my operation were really waste-free, what would it look like?" said Meador. Then start moving in that direction, he added.

According to Anderson, a continuous improvement culture brings innovation and new, better processes. He said that people should ask "What is my role in creating prosperity in Michigan?" He added that it seems like what the MLC is doing is vital to achieve this.

In the small group discussions, attendees noted change magnets that they can take back to their organizations. They learned ways to get leadership to believe in Lean, the advantage of bringing in external coaches to help leaders, and the importance of making Lean results visible and framing the vision of their organizations around the concept of Lean.

Also, the presentation showed how the simple things are the most important, including honesty, integrity, respect, safety and empowerment.

"Honest communication is not an approach for a crisis, it's just good leadership," Anderson said. And Meador advised not to make continuous improvement culture an edict but rather invite people and make sure it is leader-lead.

For more information about the MLC and upcoming benchmarking events, visit www.michiganlean.org.

The mission of the MLC is to offer a diverse network of knowledgeable Lean professionals who come together to share innovative practices. The organization aims to create a Lean culture in Michigan to ensure sustainable competitive advantage, which could translate into healthier businesses that offer more job opportunities leading to economic growth in the state.

The charter members of the MLC include: Amway, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, DTE Energy, Johnson & Johnson, The Lean Learning Center, Northwestern Michigan College, the Oakland University Pawley Lean Institute and the Michigan Shingo Prize through The Right Place.



MLC and DTE leaders pose for a photo at a recent MLC benchmarking event: (left to right) Chris Wilson, MLC secretary; Jason Schulist, MLC vice chair and director of Continuous Improvement at DTE; Debra Setman, MLC chair, Gerry Anderson, president and COO at DTE; and David Meador, executive vice president and CFO at DTE.

SUMMARY

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