

Take it to the bank

Depositing money at the bank during your lunch break can be surprisingly instructive: I had to make a deposit at a bank near my office, so I decided to go during my 30-minute break. I intended to complete this task very quickly using the money transfer terminal, but instead ended up reflecting on how much Lean Six Sigma could increase the efficiency of service organizations.

by Marius Stăvărache



Before walking the short distance to the bank, I prepared everything so I could quickly use the money transfer terminal at the entrance. But when I arrived, I saw that the machine was broken, so I had to use the only open counter, where four people were waiting in line. Within a few minutes, the line had seven people in it and was almost out the door. Besides the teller, there were four other employees, two of them working with clients and the other two just sitting in front of their monitors, looking pretty underwhelmed.

I observed two situations here: One of the employees serving a customer printed something out. To collect his papers, he had to go to the opposite side of the room and was forced to walk through the line at the teller's counter. We could clearly see his annoyance about the people standing in his way. Then, the other employee serving a customer asked the teller to do something for her client, thus making all the others wait. The entire time I was waiting, the two employees without customers continued to sit in front of their monitors. It took me a total of more than 40 minutes to make a simple deposit.

Put my thinking cap on

Standing in line for 40 minutes got me thinking about how they could improve their customer service and be more client-oriented. I came to the conclusion that it would take more than a simple customer orientation training; it would require a flexible working structure and a culture oriented to offering value for the clients in the most efficient way. We usually recommend that our clients take a look at their business from a Lean Six Sigma perspective. The method enables them to identify improvement opportunities regarding workspace, processes, management systems, value streams, waste reduction (outside the skin), as well as soft factors like people's competencies and skills, feelings and beliefs and the organizational culture (inside the skin). In order to assure sustainable results, we use change management methodologies and co-create an attractive vision of the future together with our clients. We work with the clients' employees and transfer the required competencies for continuing improvement. The result is an enriched organizational culture focused on customer value and an orientation towards continuous improvement as well as efficient and effective processes. ●