

Harrington Institute's Community Improvement Efforts Reap Big Rewards

During the past five years, the Harrington Institute and its Business Partners have been involved in community improvement efforts that have produced significant results within the organizations involved. The thrust of the effort involved 20 projects and certifying over 200 Black and Green Belts who worked on improvement projects involving a wide variety of community-based organizations, both governmental, social services, . The focus of the projects has been on community improvement involving the 'at-risk' population, such as children and families, seniors, and student outreach and participation.

All told over the past five years, a total of \$5 million in in-kind consulting has been provided for community improvement projects on a pro-bono basis by Harrington Institute and UCF faculty, local professionals and students alike. The first major breakthrough project in 2003 was the Seminole County Childrens Alliance (SCCA), which involved over forty (40) county and city agencies, and resulted in over \$2 million of 'pro bono' consulting services on the part of 20 team members over a one-year period.

In 2002, Harrington Institute Chancellor Frank Voehl approached the Local ASQ Section about sponsoring projects involving both students at UCF and 'senior' quality professionals working in the Orlando/Central Florida area. "At the time, I was working as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Harrington Group software company. My interactions with other Orlando businessmen convinced me that to become more attractive as a blossoming community, we needed to deal with two problems: (1) the agencies and organizations serving the 'at-risk' population were in trouble and needed help and (2) students and local professionals needed to learn the Lean six Sigma quality tools."

"If their managers left and their replacements were less passionate about the job, the quality started to suffer," observed Voehl. "There are two sides for achieving high quality. You have to a passion for it as well as a system for it. They had the passion, but they didn't have much in the way of system. When they learned about the Harrington Institute Certification Assistance Program, they jumped on it to help these needy community-faced organizations create a better quality system."

Lean Six Sigma integrates two quality systems, Lean Manufacturing and Six Sigma. The Six Sigma process is a measure of quality that strives for near perfection. It is a disciplined, data-driven approach and methodology for eliminating defects in any process, from manufacturing to transactional and from product to service. According to the Six Sigma approach, an increase in performance and decrease in process variation reduces product defects and improves profits, employee morale and overall quality. The fundamental objective of the Lean Six Sigma methodology is the implementation of a measurement-based strategy that focuses on process improvement and variation reduction through the application of Lean Six Sigma improvement projects.

By working on Lean Six Sigma projects, business people, students, and community-serving organizations incorporated the speed and impact of Lean with the quality and

variation control of Six Sigma. “Before we started the Community Improvement initiative, Orlando organizations did little root cause analysis and problem resolution,” Voehl said. “For example, when we identified several service problems the response was ‘that’s nothing new; we knew those problems existed over a year ago.’ They didn’t have the tools to systematically root out the source of problems and permanently resolve them. Instead, they were solving similar problems over and over again. Lean Six Sigma has provided Lakeview Center with a process for uncovering problems as well as a process and some good tools for solving them so that they go away once and for all.”

Voehl reports that when the Lean Six Sigma measure of quality is a good fit for an organization, the benefits can be huge—dramatically improved quality; the elimination of waste; reduced service times; and lower costs, as have been realized by a most recent Orlando Community Improvement Project #20. Costs have been dramatically reduced, cycle time improved and Customer Satisfaction goals surpassed, according to a recently documented project closure report. “I know everyone has spent a huge amount of their time on this project. The resulting recommendations that will be implemented will ultimately make a huge difference for many ACCESS Florida customers in the future. You can be very proud of what you have accomplished. Please accept my appreciation for everything you and the rest of our team members have done for our Department and for our customers.” Dana Johnston, DCF Program Manager, Orlando Central Region ACCESS Florida Program Office

After working with the Orlando Community Improvement initiative, Voehl may have become the strongest supporter ever of the Harrington Institute’s Quality Assistance Program. “I believe what the Institute is offering to communities is the biggest ‘no-brainer’ in history of the earth,” Voehl said. “The question is why wouldn’t more community agencies want to utilize it? The only risk is admitting your organization needs help and the benefits far outweigh that.” All told, millions of dollars have been saved in cost avoidances for the taxpayers in Central Florida; over 200 people have been certified as Lean Six Sigma Belts, and lives have been bettered for the ‘at-risk’ population in Florida-- A true Triple Crown of Quality Improvement!