

International Company Creates High Performing Team

Mammoet USA, Inc., the United States division of Netherlands based Mammoet, a worldwide leader in heavy lifting and transport, brought a challenging problem to P Squared Management Consulting in The Woodlands, Texas. A new management team, in place about a year, had set a very aggressive goal to triple the size of the division within three years through acquisitions and organic growth. However, with the legacy culture they inherited, they were not sure how to achieve this goal.

Initial discussions with management and employees uncovered several overriding areas for improvement: improved teamwork between employees and departments; the need to understand and integrate international cultures; upgrade company process and strengthen supply chain; and, create a new culture grounded in continuous process improvement using teams as the core foundation.

Employees further noted that if anything was going to change, they needed management support and empowerment. They wanted management to guide them with a plan to improve overall company processes.

Historical Perspective

During the last ten years, P Squared developed and refined an approach to ensure success when an organization makes the decision to use process improvement to improve the productivity and the profitability of the company. Comprised of a series of business processes, this plan works with equal effectiveness, from manufacturing to service providers to healthcare operations of all types.

The P-Squared approach succeeds primarily due to its simplicity, allowing everyone in an organization to engage in the process improvement methods and fully support the effort. Understanding comes through the use of time-tested methods of obtaining employee ownership of their processes is simple, helping them understand their internal customer/supplier relationships and needs, clearly mapping out the "should be" state of their processes, and having them identify problems and opportunities for improvement. By streamlining and clarifying processes, eliminating waste, and applying common sense process improvement tools, an organization can vastly improve their bottom line.

The solution

For Mammoet USA, Inc., P Squared responded with a step by step solution that guided and developed the management team, first educating them and laying a process improvement (PI) foundation. The question was, where and how PI could generate improvement? A customized implementation plan was developed jointly with the management steering team. Every management team member was now supportive and knowledgeable as the plan was driven deeper into the organization.

Once the implementation plan was developed, all employees involved in the effort were also educated and armed with an understanding of simple process improvement tools. They used these tools to define their department's mission, their unique reason for being a part of the organization, and gave them a stronger feeling of being a team. They then used the following simple steps to better understand their process:

- Identify what the team supplies to their “customer” – their output.
- Identify the “customer” that receives this output.
- Identify what the customer expects and needs from the team as they provide this output.
- Map out the steps in the work process that produces this output.
- Identify ways that this process can be measured to ensure it satisfies the customer requirements.
- Then, take measurements to determine if the process is capable of providing what the customer needs – is it a high quality process?
- Finally, when a high quality process is in place, lock in and document any improvements.

The results

With each department process clearly defined and interdepartmental support needs identified, each employee understood what they needed to do ensure that their customer-supplier relationship was strong throughout the organization. Team-to-team critical accountability and commitment was generated.

These efforts also resulted in clear job descriptions, each employee knew how to do their job and how they fit in to the company process. Managers are more confident; they were able to focus on the mission of their department with key performance measurements, and focus on their own job and not the job of their employees.

This created a great feeling of “team work” driven primarily by joint participation in the definition of each work team’s responsibility as well as how they integrate with other teams company wide. Department barriers became transparent and all employees realized they were part of the same team!

During a six month follow-up by P Squared, the chief operating officer (COO) announced that business volume and profit was up significantly over the previous year. The COO further explained that this was done without added resources, and that the process improvement effort allowed the company to do more with the same people and equipment. The only thing that changed was the improvement of how the employees performed their processes and their committed ownership for the success of the improvements.

They were not working any harder. They were working smarter, resulting in increased productivity, volume, efficiency, morale, and profit.

This case study really drives home that any business’s only “true” competitive advantage is their people. The key to capitalizing on that competitive advantage is “team-based continuous process improvement” with the support of a committed management team. An elegantly simple management philosophy that always, always holds true.