WOUNDED TRANSITION BATTALION SERVICE MEMBER AIRPORT TRANSPORTATION

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Executive Summary

Problem Statement

There are no dedicated means of transportation from the DMV airports to the Warrior Transition Battalion for Service Members.   Service members are stranded at airports across DMV area without knowledge management and resources to complete their mission to the WTU. There is an opportunity to better service our Soldiers by providing transportation and logistical support.

Project Scope

The scope of this project begins when STARTC notifies the WTU of inbound Service Member and ends when the Service Member arrives at the WTU. It does not include training, education and mentorship for personnel outside of WTU transportation.

Major Project Phase (DMAIC) Milestones and Key Learning

In the Define phase the team proposed a charter to the project sponsor and Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt. Developing the charter clarified and confirmed the need for a process improvement project for WTU SM Transportation. The team first constructed Suppliers, Inputs, Process, Outputs, Outcomes and Customers (SIPOOC) map that helped identify their customers and the outputs associated to them. This helped the team highlight areas where more clarity was required in relation to customer requirements, outputs, and what in the process needed to be measured. The team also utilized the voice of the customer (VOC) and voice of the business (VOB) tool to focus on the key customer issues in the current process, as well as requirements in the new process. It was determined that service members wanted a more streamlined transportation standard operating procedure, but they also had very specific requirements they wanted to see in the new process and final product. This allowed the team to develop an improved standard operating procedure for all transportation within the national capital region.

In the Measure phase, the team mapped the as-is process in which the team ran simulated data collection through pre-determined routes of three NCR Airports (IAD, BWI, DCA), with four different measured timeframes. The team surveyed 100% of eligible service members with a 60% return, identifying friction and data collection points. Building off the SIPOOC the team built a detailed picture of the current process and then identified steps within the transportation process that were value added or non-value added. The team ensured that steps deemed value added, met common criteria of changing the sequence and it's something the service members cares about while challenging non-value-added steps

The Analyze phase helped identify "why" things happened in the process and determined the root causes. The team evaluated the data collected in the measure phase and utilized the fishbone diagram, along with the 5W's tool to conduct a deeper cause-effect analysis. By utilizing these analysis tools, results were produced that confirmed the team's suspicions and reinforced process discrepancies within the transportation process. The analysis results confirmed that current transportation processes are inefficient and needed to be revamped.

In the Improve phase, after receiving guidance from the Battalion Commander (Project Sponsor), the team sought out to identify near-misses through a Failure Modes and Effects Analysis (FMEA) and a planned learning launch. The team developed a detailed training plan, outlining precise instructions for desired transportation methods. Finally, through synergistic mapping, the team created a single control plan that reduced friction points and managed risk. Through careful evaluation, the team eliminated two of the airport destinations, thus reducing cost, man power and ensured an increase in overall service member satisfaction.

In the Control phase, the team created the "new norm" by first implementing the approved training for the necessary cadre. The team created an SOP that ensured continuity for future missions, resulting in dedicated contact teams with garrison vehicles, receiving service members from Dulles Airport. This was accomplished by identifying the Battalion Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIRs) through previously established metrics. The following is a list of CCIRs: 1) originally there were three locations for service member pickups this will be reduced to one (IAD) for better locale and 24-hour accessibility. 2) Dedicated contact team for pickups of all Service Members and vehicle support from Fort Belvoir Garrison. 3) Streamlining the pickup process to Dulles airport, will mitigate risk through removed variations.

Conclusions

The WTB SM Airport Transportation project leveraged the DMAIC methodology to improve the transportation process. The goal was to NLT 31 July 2019, establish a formal framework with sufficient detail, resources and organization infrastructure to support and sustain the coordinated effort or the movement of service members from the Baltimore-Washington International, Dulles International and Ronald Reagan Airport.

Benefits Realized

The benefits realized by this project encompassed cost avoidance and quality of life. The entrance of service members to one singular airport during pre-determined times, help eliminate confusion and eliminates variation or variability. The standardizing of contact teams through dedicated trainings, has led to improved service member experience. For VOC, waiting times at airport and travel times are significantly reduced. For VOB, the travel time is greatly reduced by making one singular trip to Dulles. Service member out of pocket cost for transportation is eliminated. The WTB would see reduced vehicular expenses due to Fort Belvoir Garrison providing transportation. Customer satisfaction is greatly increased by having a designated contact team waiting to provide services upon arrival. This satisfaction is reciprocated to the WTB when more service members have less complaints or complications.

Lessons Learned

1. The team identified the most likely arrival times for Soldiers by each airport. The conclusion was drawn that there is a future prediction of when best to have standby teams.
2. The team identified various factors for behavioral high risk vs. physical limitations and what "package" design for extraction when service member arrives.
3. The team realized that there could have had better Command Buy-In. Command "Buy-In" would have generated more options and put a command emphasis behind the surveys.
4. The team identified that the consolidation of airports, specifically flights into Dulles and the elimination of DCA/BWI due to logistical overhead cost and logistics with an emphasis on safety.
5. The team concluded that the use of dedicated GSA vehicles for BN transportation would effectively reduce cost and transfer the debt from the Soldier to the GSA budget
6. The team developed specific surveys that aided tremendously in the project however, they could have given Soldiers surveys at BN formations in a controlled environment.
7. The team realized that Soldier's survey are a fantastic tool however, utilizing something like Survey Monkey could have broken down data points.
8. The team found out that Reagan Airport does not have flights after 10pm and essentially all flights should go to Dulles for predictability.
9. The team developed a working knowledge that goals can change over time. This prompted us to the realization that what you thought worked best never did or could be done more efficiently.