

Village, School District, GE Healthcare, and Nth Degree Software Enter into Partnership

Process Improvement

Bringing some of corporate America's Process Improvement (PI) initiatives to municipal government was an idea that I brought forward in my campaign for president, and after several months of research, development and negotiation with potential partners, I am pleased to announce a new four-way partnership; a partnership that will put your entire village government on track towards pursuing continual improvement. I am very proud to announce this partnership includes your Village, the Greendale School District, GE Healthcare and Nth Degree Software. These parties are united in their goal to make Greendale a "high performance" government.

What is Process Improvement?

Process Improvement is a systematic approach to problem solving. Although there are several models of Process Improvement being used in the corporate world, they are all similar in their focus on providing companies and organizations with consistent tools to analyze the root-cause of problems and how to find solutions.

Toyota was the first large global company to master a system model in which Process Improvement consistently eliminated steps, errors and waste. Their success was significant enough to make other world companies sit-up and take notice. In the '80's, Motorola was the first U.S. company to devise and implement a PI model known as Six-Sigma. Other companies like General Electric, Allied Signal and Ford soon followed suit and incorporated Six-Sigma into their companies. So successful were their efforts that most of them now require their affiliated companies and suppliers to fully integrate these PI initiatives.

Ok, it works in the private sector but what will PI accomplish in Greendale?

In today's economic and political climate, we must find ways to reduce costs and manage cash-flow while continuing to deliver excellent customer service to the citizens of Greendale. Process Improvement initiatives will challenge all Village departments to further increase efficiency, prevent most errors and provide our residents with more value for their tax dollars. But most important, it will provide the employees and department heads with the tools they need to embark on a daily pursuit of continual improvement.

Why a partnership?

When contemplating the best scenario for implementation of Process Improvement in our village, I conceptualized not only high-performance Village government, but by including the School District, we could create an absolute "high-performance" government. Dr. William Hughes (School Superintendent) and Judy Fons (School Board President) enthusiastically agreed to join and

participate in this effort. This was not only a significant step for each entity, but our partnership also meant that we could train together and facilitate each other's improvement efforts by exchanging trained employees across village governmental boundaries when necessary. This agreement is significant and a first of its kind in our village. We also believe that we are the only municipality in Wisconsin to enter into this type of partnership. I extend my sincere appreciation to the school administration for joining with us in this pursuit of "high-performance" government.

The next step was to locate the best possible Process Improvement training for both Village and School District employees. Having done research, I knew that PI training was very expensive and time consuming. While I was not as worried about the time aspect, I was concerned about the cost. I also knew that we needed to seek the best available training in order for our efforts to succeed and to have a lasting impact into the future of our community.

Private sector companies routinely pay thousands of dollars to train their employees in Process Improvement. They are able to spend training dollars far more readily than we in the public sector. So I approached one of the world leaders in Process Improvement, who just happens to be headquartered within the Milwaukee region - GE Healthcare.

Needless to say I was apprehensive to initiate a conversation with GE about this effort, but I also knew from my research that GE, and GE Healthcare, have a long history of community service, and for encouraging their employees to perform community service. I was extremely pleased when they agreed to partner with us and provide ALL of the training as a gesture of their community support. We believe this agreement is GE's first-known effort to provide PI training to any municipality. Consider also that we will not only learn these techniques from the best in the industry, but we will also be able to apply one of the world's most updated Process Improvement models into our operations.

Having assembled the three partners, I was very pleased with the way things were progressing. Dr. Hughes then notified me that he discussed our agreement with a Greendale software company that specializes in facilitating efforts within the Process Improvement realm. Enter the fourth partner - Nth Degree Software.

Nth Degree Software offers both the Village and School District an opportunity to mold our individual Process Improvement experiences to our own missions and/or departmental needs through customized software applications. As Nth Degree Software is a start-up company with a product that fits perfectly into the GE Process Improvement model, they were eager to offer a win-win opportunity for all parties.

Out of the Starting Blocks

Initial planning and implementation meetings between the four parties have taken place, and we are now starting the initial phase of training. Implementation and training are the most critical phases of any successful Process Improvement Program. We plan to ensure we get off on the right foot.

We will keep you updated on our progress and successes.

Happy Holidays Everyone!

John R. Hermes
Village President