



Just-In-Time management techniques – a DDC culture update

The Defense Logistics Agency culture survey provides the organization with the opportunity to identify areas for improvement based on the insights of employees across the organization. Many of the local action plans developed throughout Defense Distribution Center include efforts to improve the relationship between employees and management. Some particular focus areas in the action plans include improving communication, building trust, or increasing the involvement of employees.

“No matter what aspect of management is the focus of attention, management principles should always be the guide for the improvement efforts. Principles should be at the foundation of how we implement our improvement efforts,” said John Destalo, culture champion and member of the DDC organizational development team.

One management principle that can help the implementation of all these efforts is “Just-In-Time.” This is a foundational principle of Lean Techniques and is more commonly applied in a physical setting, such as moving parts through the organization to the customer. It is usually defined as getting the right part, to the right person, in the right quantity, in the right time and place and at the right cost.

“Just-In-Time” can be also be applied to management activities such as identifying and solving problems, recognizing employee achievements, or coaching employees on critical skills. “Just-In-Time” is as critical a principle for managing employees as it is for providing parts to customers. “The closer in person, place, and time that management activities occur the more valuable they will be for the organization and the individuals involved,” said Destalo. “The further away from an actual event that a manager provides feedback to an employee the less value that can be generated from that experience. This is especially true for problem solving as it is more difficult to identify and resolve root causes the further they are from the time and place of occurrence.”

So, specifically how do we apply the principle of “Just-In-Time” to how we manage employees?

Two organizations within DDC Headquarters have given examples for how to do just that. They have either developed or expanded efforts that demonstrate “Just-In-Time” techniques in their organizations through their efforts to improve their culture.

One organization identified a need to improve how employees are recognized for superior performance. The plan they designed and implemented embraces the need to provide immediate feedback (close in person, place, and time) for the employee’s superior efforts. Rather than wait until weekly or monthly meetings occur (which is more common), when there could be significant time between the event and the reward, they hold quick (one minute) meetings, where they gather the employees and recognize an individual for superior performance on-the-spot.

Another organization expanded a program that also facilitates just-in-time employee recognition. The Peer-to-Peer Award program was developed to give employees the opportunity to reward those who have provided exceptional support to them. It is recognition by management that there are efforts that occur on a day-to-day basis that are difficult to identify and employees are sometimes in the best position to expose these efforts. “It is a program that was developed by and is supported by management recognizing that in addition to providing positive feedback to employees it also supports teambuilding efforts,” said Destalo.



Let Your Voice Be Heard!

DDC's leaders want to hear your suggestions and questions for improving DDC's culture.

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