



## Welcome to Wired-GOV's Spotlight on Lean.

This is the first in a series of features we will be running, the aim of which is to focus on a significant part of public sector management, to examine the philosophy behind it, the drivers which underpin it and to assess the impact of its implementation across the public sector. This provides an ideal opportunity for all parties to take stock of some of the most important policy initiatives of the day, to delve deep into how different approaches are being applied and to extract best practice examples from across government. In this we will be inviting the leading figures and thinkers from government and academia, as well as bringing the views and opinions of the best and most innovative minds from the private sector.

The first Spotlight on... looks at Lean, a discipline which has been mistakenly thought to be a thinly veiled ruse to reduce headcount and cut spending. On the contrary, for those who understand its true intentions and outcomes, Lean can deliver huge benefits to the organisation, its staff and customers and can become the keystone in the management of the severe budget reductions all public bodies are now facing. We aim to explode the myths surrounding Lean, to reveal the real value that its successful application can bring, and

to highlight how Lean is having dramatic effects within certain departments and agencies today.

And Lean is a subject to which government is committed to and, in the main, wholeheartedly embracing. Its principles are endorsed within the Operational Efficiency Programme Final Report, stating that "*public service organisations that are introducing ongoing cycles of continuous improvement, often based on the Lean approach, are improving cost effectiveness, quality of services, timeliness of services and are engaging more successfully with their workforce.*" ([www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/oepep\\_final\\_report\\_210409\\_pu728.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/oepep_final_report_210409_pu728.pdf))

So what's it all about? To pin down one clear definition of Lean is not easy but in essence Lean is a systemic approach to reducing costs and cutting waste whilst driving up quality and improving services for the customer. From its roots in the car manufacturing industry, Lean has developed through the analysis of operational data, with the use of business intelligence technologies, innovative workflow processes, the productivity of the workforce is enhanced for the benefit of all – the organisation, the staff and the customer. Achieving this in a public sector context

will, almost certainly, soften the blow of the spending cuts.

The stresses now placed on departmental budgets are clear. But, whilst putting these tight fiscal measures in place, the Government is looking for minimal impact on service delivery, with the focus being entirely on the value provided to the customer. Lean principles seek to address operational process inefficiencies at their source – very often at the frontline delivery of services – so issues such as organisational performance measures, culture, skills, technology and location must all be looked at from a Lean perspective.

In most organisations this means re-shaping people's roles and the way they behave – two change factors that are notoriously difficult to manage and which require strong and astute leadership, to inspire and support staff in doing things differently – and doing things better. To successfully embed Lean into an organisation sometimes takes something of a leap of faith but, as the following articles and case studies reveal, with careful planning, strong leadership and a dedicated and informed workforce, the long-term strategic goals of the organisation can be reached to the ultimate satisfaction of us all.



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