

Lean in any language

International offices work together to get leaner

By Stephen Davis

They met in London. They came from Amsterdam, Ankara, Berlin, Brussels, Madrid, Mexico City, Paris, Rome, Tel Aviv and Warsaw, as well as London. In early 2008, a team of Shared Services Group business support managers got to work streamlining how they do Boeing business, using Lean thinking and engaging in a new level of international cooperation.

“Our responsibilities are to take our knowledge of how to do things in country and integrate it with SSG and Corporate requirements,” said Jason McCauley, a Berlin-based business support manager and team member.

Since that first meeting, the team has been working across international boundaries and with Boeing organizations in the United States to find ways to adapt Boeing policies and processes to local requirements. It has also sought ways to reduce costs despite rapid business growth, and to improve career development and job mobility for non-U.S. employees.

“SSG initiatives are lowering costs incurred by Boeing operating globally,” said Shep Hill, president of Boeing International. “Their focus has been on improving processes, reducing costs and delivering world-class services. As these achievements are realized, it enables our business to grow profitably.”

One sub-team’s work supports employees who relocate around the globe. International relocation involves everything from obtaining housing and fulfilling visa and residency permit requirements to finding schools for employees’ children. The team helped define responsibility, accountability and authority for all steps in the process, contributing to an improvement effort now under way worldwide.

Car leasing was another area the team improved. In the past, international employees on a long-term assignment to another country would rent cars until they could lease a car from a local dealer. Now, a simple online request form and a single, standard process gets employees out of rental cars and into more economical leased cars more quickly. The team’s improvements have also reduced cell phone costs by managing variable requirements, like different roaming charges between countries.

Another need that became clear during the Lean sessions was creation of a guidebook and contact matrix for every office, listing country-specific requirements and contacts in Boeing and in country for everything from courier services to Human Resources. That’s now being put together under the leadership of McCauley and Antoine Bois, business support manager in Paris. When completed, these tools will allow international office staff to fill in for one another locally and even across borders, and open up rotational opportunities. That’s important to enhance career development.

“All of our Boeing offices have been put in place over the years for different reasons, using their own processes. I saw an opportunity for us to look for common processes to standardize and share,” said Kim Alberts, who is based in Rome and is the SSG regional director for Europe, Israel and the non-U.S. sites in the Americas.

Said Bois: “When Kim [Alberts] asked me to do this I said, This is a good idea because it doesn’t all come from the States. We are local and can really bring something to The Boeing Company. It is real teamwork.”

McCauley agreed. “Having people from the international sites lead improvement initiatives while involving key functions from the U.S. represented a paradigm shift. Working together and including everybody really delivered positive results.” ■

stephen.m.davis@boeing.com



PHOTO: Jason McCauley, Shared Services Group business support manager, calls his Berlin office from the Amsterdam Spares Distribution Center. SSG has standardized the ordering and contracting process for cellular phone service in most European countries. Standard processes strengthen Boeing’s global presence. **MICHA LIEVERS/BOEING**

Offices support Boeing’s international presence

Boeing has thousands of employees at hundreds of sites worldwide. Twenty-six international sites serve as administrative hubs for all Boeing’s non-U.S.-based employees. Staff at these sites, from Corporate, Shared Services, Human Resources, Information Technology and other organizations, help ensure the company’s business dealings comply with local laws—everything from getting in-country taxes paid to making sure Boeing policies conform to local laws about vacation time and working conditions. They also directly support Boeing International and the business units as these organizations develop international markets to grow the company’s business. For more information, link to SSG International Business Support on the Boeing intranet at <http://ssgintsvcs.web.boeing.com/index.asp>.