EXCELLENCE IN ACTION
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SEE A PROBLEM - FIX A PROBLEM

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THE CHALLENGE
Two years ago, the Facilities Services department underwent a Lean training exercise where departmental staff were asked to come up with ideas for areas of improvement and write them down on green slips. “The green slips were a good idea and lots of ideas were generated. The problem though is that very few of those ideas were getting done” says Jay Haynes, Manager, Civil Trades. His team had in place processes for doing maintenance and projects but no processes existed for Kaizen type improvements.

“Many of the trades had approached their manager or supervisor in the past with suggestions but there was literally no way to get those suggestions done. They know how to put in a work order. But how do you put work orders in to get new uniforms or get jackets or change a process? There weren’t any outlets for their ideas to take shape so that’s something we had to change.”

THE OBJECTIVE
To better facilitate internal process improvements among trade’s staff by introducing mechanisms to speed up and address needs and concerns.

THE APPROACH
“You need to have all your team gather around together every day and just talk,” says Jay. “That’s one of the best ways to build comradery.” Jay and his team setup an Operational Excellence board where staff have their morning huddle to foster conversation.

“We now make it a part of our daily routine to look at the board and see if any of the ideas on there need a hand to get implemented so we don’t let good ideas die.” Jay and his team then introduced a policy of ‘see a problem fix a problem’ empowering staff and their managers to address issues right away. “We streamlined the decision making process and removed some of the bureaucracy so now when folks have an idea for a Kaizen type improvement, we have a process in place to address it.”

THE RESULT
To date, the Building & Grounds team have completed over 20 Operational Excellence initiatives. Some of the initiatives recently undertaken include improving vehicle assignments by using a truck sign-out board allowing staff to know who is driving which departmental vehicle on campus. In order to better equip staff, alternative longer rain jackets more suitable for certain kinds of work during the rainy season were approved.

Other improvements also include new equipment and tools like pumps for floods, replacing a broken bandsaw, and building some carts for moving specialty items like the recently constructed firepits. “These improvements empower FS staff to embrace the idea of “see a problem fix a problem” and makes us feel more interconnected. It’s clear now that we’re one team rowing in the same direction.”