

Manager's Quick Start Guide for Engaging Employees Through "Everyday Ideas"

Quick-Start Guide, Part 1

We need to listen to our employees and engage them in making CDOT better; the "Everyday Ideas" initiative seeks to do this. Engaging our people in developing and implementing good ideas yields numerous benefits for CDOT and our customers:

1. Small (or micro) ideas are easiest to think of, cheapest to implement, and quickest to see results.
2. The best incentive for improvement ideas is quick implementation and gratification in the benefits.
3. Individual-supplied ideas are how employee engagement is realized, measured and expanded.
4. Small ideas often turn into the best big ideas.
5. Continuous flow of ideas from across an agency like CDOT gives insight to large, systemic issues.
6. Everyday Ideas come from employees whose intellect and talent should be valued and utilized.

Everyday Ideas can be discovered, assessed, implemented and enjoyed by even the smallest groups, without the need for large teams or overhead. Here are several activities you can start today, WITHOUT having to seek anyone's permission:

Activity 1: Engage people at your next staff/crew/team meeting. Starting with your next staff, crew or team meeting, ask: *"As you all were working over the past week, what opportunities for improvement did you notice?"* When someone identifies an opportunity and offers a suggestion:

1. Have an open discussion as a group.
2. Record the idea, and within 24 hours, respond to it with a "green" or "red" light, explaining why.
3. For green-light ideas, organize to carry out implementation within 72 hours, or sooner – preferably with direct involvement of the person who developed the idea and/or other people from your Team.

By showing a quick response to common problems for improving your group's work, you demonstrate commitment to your team that the team is empowered for its own success.

Activity 2: Break down bigger ideas. If you and your Team have ideas that are too large for quick implementation, you should seek support from your management. However, if the idea can be broken into smaller pieces, do so with the following questions:

- What part of this idea is within the control of this group?
- What can be done without affecting those outside this group?
- How much can be done completely within 72 hours?
- Then, organize to carry out implementation within 72 hours, or sooner – preferably with direct involvement of the person who developed the idea and/or other people from your Team.

Activity 3: Keep getting ideas generated and implemented. Here are some other quick-starter questions to get ideas for improvement opportunities that you and your Team can implement:

- What do our customers complain about or ask for?
- Which of our work processes cause the most pain?
- Where does rework occur, or what parts of the work need frequent rework?
- When do we get delayed in our processes?
- What problems would you solve if you had a "magic wand"?

Ideas can be guided toward a specific value, metric, initiative, or goal - local or agency-wide. The key is to build up the process, the flow, and then point it in the direction of greatest effect.

Quick-Start Guide, Part 2

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Here are some additional actions that you, as a Manager, can take today (without anyone else's permission!) to engage employees through Everyday Ideas

Reference: Ideas Are Free by Alan G. Robinson & Dean M. Schroeder (Berrett-Koehler, 2006)

For more detail on the benefits of developing and implementing small, everyday ideas, read the first chapter of Ideas Are Free by Robinson and Schroeder (just 28 pages long). For guidance on building an ideas process, read the rest of the book and check out CDOT's Everyday Ideas initiative here: <http://bit.ly/11FwDFp> or -- <http://www.coloradodot.info/business/process-improvement/everyday-lean-innovations-ideas/>

Here are some additional "Guerilla Tactics" summarized below from these pages from "Ideas Are Free": pages 58, 90-91, 117-118, 146-147, 167-168, and 195-196:

Primary activities
1. Just ask (p. 58); poll your people (p. 168)
2. Help people with their ideas (p. 146); work with reluctant participants (p. 58); give extra attention to that first idea (p. 146)
3. Start with problems (p. 90); address bottlenecks (p. 117)
4. Select your targets (p. 167); focus on your customers (p. 167); look to reinforce your core values (p. 168)
5. Identify and visibly display problems (p. 90); use metrics (p. 168); record "exceptions" (p. 195)
6. Make a personal commitment (p. 146)
7. Create heroes (p. 91); publicize results (p. 117)
8. Make ideas a priority for everyone (p. 147)
9. When changes occur, ask for ideas (p. 58); turn complaints into ideas (p. 90)
10. Look for a "bigger opportunity" in a smaller idea (p. 58); pass it along (p. 146)
11. Follow through, follow through, follow through (p. 90); don't be stymied by implementation bottlenecks (p. 147)
Some supporting activities
1. Offer lunch (p. 58); get out of your office (p. 195)
2. Recruit your boss (p. 118)
3. Train, train, train (p. 195); exploit learning opportunities (p. 117)
4. Rotate your people (p. 195); encourage diverse perspectives (p. 196)

This Quick Start Guide was developed in June 2013 (revised in March 2014), by Marcus Ritosa and Gary Vansuch, from CDOT's Office of Process Improvement – Implementing the Three E's: Effectiveness, Efficiency and Elegance in state government.