Challenge

How to evolve to a value stream management approach in a way that was embraced by everyone and minimized disruption.

Solution

From rolls of paper to dashboards, Unum turned ValueOps VSM to connect teams, work and funding across the enterprise.

Benefits

While mini projects, so-called Trojan Mice, smoothed the way for change, teams now have a better understanding of the value they bring directly to customers.
Solution (cont.)

But there is more to Unum’s approach than rolls of paper. They leveraged ValueOps VSM to track data and manage trends. O’Connor points out, “We’re heavily invested in dashboards, they’re great levelers of communication for us, removing ambiguity. Data drives all our decisions.”

O’Connor also said, “We originally planned to have stable teams, but we recognized early, through the data available to us, that unless there was a degree of turnover, teams would become stale. The ability to implement fresh thinking in our teams, and to help our people develop has given us a much more sustainable model.”

Benefits

At Unum, ValueOps VSM allows people to make better decisions in less time. They do not try to focus on a single metric, but recognize that value streams are driving many improvements throughout the business. O’Connor said, “The quality of our conversations has changed, it is obvious everywhere from meeting to business cases.”

But perhaps the biggest benefit that O’Connor and her team were able to enable has been the way that change has been implemented and embraced within the company. “Rather than try to implement large scale change we broke our changes out into smaller pieces. We did not try to create a Trojan horse; we created many Trojan mice.”

The Trojan mice are busily at work across the organization working to make small adjustments to processes in one place, to change one or two elements of a screen somewhere else. None of them are large enough to disrupt how people work, but combined they fundamentally shift the business, without creating unease among the people affected by the changes.

“We don’t overcomplicate things,” said O’Connor. “Coherent actions are the elements of a value stream. If you can’t explain or document something then you don’t understand it so we spend more time assessing it.” By keeping it simple, and implementing changes in a way that they can easily be consumed, Unum, supported by ValueOps VSM, is driving value throughout their business.

For more information, please visit our site VSMSummit.com.