

CASE STUDY



Industrial method yield results in Danish municipality

Management of Professionals: The implementation of simple production management principles from the industry and systematic training of employees have resulted in reduced time consumption, superior case management and growing employee wellbeing in the municipality of Odense.

Are training methods, which increase productivity at a window factory, USEABLE in a public administration? And when work deals with people and professional evaluations, are industrial experiences then applicable? Is it at all possible to standardise public management?

Yes, yes and yes. A seemingly surprising response from the municipality of Odense, where The Employment and Social Services Department has obtained notable results after testing an industrial method to

optimise operations and quality in the administration.

In the spring of 2014 we conducted five pilot projects with the training system TWI (Training Within Industry), and they have yielded very clear results all around: better service for citizens, less time wasted, more qualitative case management, higher employee satisfaction, profound professionalism and more clarity about employees and managers' roles in the administration, says Thomas Ilskov, operation management consultant in the municipality of Odense.



Thomas Ilskov
B.Sc. Eng. in Manufacturing & Systems

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Aha-moment kick started the process

The breeding ground for the pilot projects was an "aha-moment" in connection with a larger IT project in the spring of 2014, where the municipality of Odense outlined the workflow process for parts of the administration. This process revealed that the workflow; for the most part went undocumented, that it varied considerably among employees and departments, that the training of new employees was missing, and that a follow-up on how the workflow was conducted was missing as well.

This led us to organise a workshop with a focus on municipal operation management and we participated in a TWI-conference in the summer of 2014. The conference convinced us that TWI was the correct method to implement in order to achieve systematic training in the workflow and get streamlined standards for how we work. No other municipality has done this before, states Thomas Ilskov.

Training is key

The systematic training constitutes the core in TWI. A training that follows a very detailed methodology from the industrial method, with written standardised workflows.

We chose to stay true to the TWI-method's manuals, which are very specific, in our five pilot projects, which include about 120 employees from four sections in the administration, says Thomas Ilskov.

He also explains that the basic difference between before and now is: before the TWI-projects the employees conducted their work without being aware, of why they used the methods or systems they used, and without necessarily knowing if their colleagues were working in the same way, or if the next link in the chain would continue work on a case. For this reason, a consensus or a context in the system did not necessarily exist. And so, by using a streamlined training of both new and existing employees, one can ensure that all employees know why they must work the way they do, and ensure that they work in a similar manner if they are working with streamlined functions, tasks or systems.

Left core competences untouched

The project, however, also showed that training does not entail the answer to everything. E.g. the municipal social workers work with great professional insight in their field of work, and the project did not change this fact. The industry's methods are eligible for the administrative tasks concerning professional evaluations of citizens' needs. This means that the employees can be trained to fill out forms, make system searches and conduct interviews, but they are not trained in the core of their professionalism – in the social workers' case the evaluation of the citizens' situations and needs.

Nevertheless, according to a questionnaire concerning the benefits of the five TWI-pilot projects,

the facts that the processes were simplified and structured lead to greater freedom and focus on the essentials i.e. the dialogue with the citizen. The employees perceive on average a 63 percent improvement of professionalism, cooperation, well being, role clarification, task descriptions etc. Well-being has improved with 27 percent, the internal teamwork has improved with 41 percent, and 90 percent would recommend others to complete a similar project.

We can conclude that TWI has solved out challenges better than any other method we have encountered. TWI is based on the same principle that is advocated for by Toyota, namely the notion that one should build people before building cars, and this is a perfect foundation for our work with Lean, which we simply refer to as 'Operation management', says Thomas Ilskov.

He explains that one now face a detailed implementation plan, where the training of employees and tools for the operation-management are in focus. This creates a link between process description, training, goal follow up and work performance.

After a hectic year with many positive encounters with TWI we possess a continued humility towards the things we can continue to learn and the things that can continue to build us up. For this reason we are very interested in learning more about related experiences, which other municipalities may have had, encourages Thomas Ilskov.

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Facts about training within industry (TWI)

The training system Training Within Industry (TWI) is founded by the American Department of War during World War II. The combination of labor being deployed to active service and the need for markedly increasing production capacity in the industry created an acute need for effective training of many new employees. One task group realised that the most effective and fastest way to implement a change would be to offer tools to the industry with which it could implement the changes itself. Thus, a training program was created with a unique train-the-trainer focus. Read more about TWI on twi-institute.com and twi-institut-skandinavien.dk.

How TWI works

"The method supports our mindset"

The project has made me more present in the encounter with the citizen.

As said by Karen Balle Andersen, who is authority caseworker in the municipality of Odense and has participated in one of the five TWI-pilot projects. Her experience is that the projects have helped to improve the context and common structure of case managers' daily working methods. In practice it has in fact become evident that a great variation exists in the way work is conducted in and across the administration.

According to Karen Balle Andersen the projects have generated a feeling of greater security that the workflow

standards, which employees and managers focus on, bring about a streamlined and clear high quality setting for the meeting with citizens. She has helped to define standards and has trained colleagues in the TWI methods.

Being present in the management task

Basically, the method is useable in an optimising and fruitful process, which aims at improving the effects of our core tasks, says Lotte C. Jensen.

As a manager she has participated in a TWI-pilot project with her department. She notes that the current implementation of the TWI-method will create an ideal breeding ground for the principle of present-management, and in addition the method focuses in on the managers and departments' possibilities to improve the operations.

She ascertains, that the method supports our mindset both horizontally and vertically. It promotes process optimization

and its quality, but it also draws on resources from all parties involved and calls for an allocation of responsibilities, where all links in the management chain contributes and participates.

Thomas Ilskov has worked with developing and implementing systems and business processes in service and admin for the last 18 years. He is an experienced people manager from Sales and Customer Service and worked in the telco business before joining Odense Kommune (municipality of Odense)

He holds a B.Sc. Eng. in Manufacturing & Systems and is TWI Trainer in Job Instruction and Job Relation

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