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The benefits of Lean: Maximizing customer value, while minimizing waste

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A successful land development project gets that way for many different reasons. Obviously, the assembly of highly qualified consultants, effective communication, experienced leadership, and establishing a trusting, respectful relationship with the community all play a part. Successful developers know this and work hard to achieve it. It is also not a secret that a successfully completed project maximizes return while minimizing cost, time, and stress.

Balancing the needs for a positive return with the costs, time, and stress that any land development endeavor brings can be difficult. Assembling a project team that "stands in your shoes" is crucial. Your consultants need to be able to weigh all these factors and provide a solution. Proposing a solution that is cheaper to construct but more expensive to maintain may not work in the long term. On the other hand, recommending a design alternative that will require a zoning variance could lead to additional costs, time, and stress versus a by right plan. Many civil engineering firms and architectural firms will tell you that they are doing this. In fact, they probably are to one degree or another.

Beyond the obvious needs for a professional services firm - good, qualified staff who is dedicated to their craft, DiPrete Engineering also recognizes clients are looking for value. They want a product that is superior to others in the marketplace, for a similar or lower price, and without any additional time or stress. In this vein, DiPrete Engineering has implemented a process called Lean. The core idea behind Lean is to maximize customer value while minimizing waste. Simply, Lean means creating more value for customers by eliminating unnecessary tasks. A Lean organization understands customer value and focuses its key processes to continuously increase it. The ultimate goal is to provide perfect value to the customer through a perfect value creation process that has zero waste. It is a process that is continuously evolving, constantly improving processes on a day-to-day and sometimes hour-to-hour basis.

One of our best examples of the benefits of Lean is our "city and town website." We found that our staff of engineers and designers spent countless hours each week searching for zoning and subdivision information, tax assessor's information, or other various regulations for active projects, as well as prospective projects. Each city and town has their own distinct website and their own method of cataloging information. Even in 2014, finding assessor's information or zoning regulations can be like finding a needle in a haystack. Consolidating this necessary information onto one easy to use website has saved our firm hundreds of hours in labor and stress since its inception. Our staff no longer needs to navigate through each municipality's website, through multiple pages, to find specific rules or regulations. This is now replaced by a mouse click.

This tool has become much more useful over the past few years as DiPrete Engineering continues our growth with clients and projects out of our Massachusetts office. Since the implementation of

this tool in 2012, we have seen the use of our "city and town website" grow exponentially. In fact, many of our competitors have also told us (secretly!) that they use it on a daily basis. DiPrete Engineering and our client base have already realized the value using this tool for research in the 39 cities and towns located in Rhode Island and many of the 341 cities and towns in Massachusetts. We have shared our "city and town website" with our clients, and future clients at www.diprete-eng.com/citytowninfo. The ultimate compliment will be you utilizing our site and telling us how it helped you save time getting your job done.

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