

Spelling success with ‘EI’

Getting employees involved pays off in San Antonio

By JARROD BARTLETT

For the first time in his career, Eddie Soto goes to work each day feeling like an important member of a team. Soto works at Boeing’s Support Systems facility in San Antonio on the KC-135 program depot maintenance line. Employee Involvement gives him a stake in his team’s success, he said.

“This is the first place I’ve worked where management gets involved with the workers, and we’re pretty much on a first-name basis,” Soto said.

Soto, apparently, is not alone in feeling empowered to make a difference. Employee Involvement has helped the Boeing San Antonio facility dramatically improve performance.

Almost all workers in San Antonio—96 percent—are on EI teams. Moreover, they are making their mark. For instance, three of the four EI teams in the Support Systems organization of Integrated Defense Systems that have reached the highest level of maturity, stage four, are in San Antonio.

Those numbers are producing remarkable results. EI is credited with helping get programs at San Antonio back on track: the KC-135 Global Air Traffic Management program, the KC-10 thrust reverser modification, and the KC-135 program depot maintenance line.

Since EI teams were formed, the Global Air Traffic Management line has experienced a 45 percent reduction in hours to complete an aircraft; on the KC-10 TR, modification deliveries have tripled; and on the KC-135 program depot maintenance line, aircraft once delivered in 400 days can now be done in 153 days.

“It starts with (site) leadership,” said Mark Haupt, San Antonio’s EI manager. “They have to buy into it. They’ve got to encourage it. They can’t pay attention to it

one day a week, one hour a day. It’s a continual culture shift.”

In the old culture, management completely controlled processes and the implementation of new ideas. The EI culture has teams of employees, who know their processes best, suggesting and implementing changes that directly benefit their work flow. Loren Bedore, manager of Lean, Employee Involvement and Operations support in San Antonio, credited leadership with creating the culture of change.

“Our key to success in San Antonio is we have the right leadership in place and the right culture for change; and we have set up an infrastructure to deploy the training to the employees,” Bedore said.

San Antonio leaders believe in the EI culture. “My role is to aggressively support EI from a leadership perspective and to coach site leadership to follow my lead,” said Tim Coyle, vice president and general manager of Operations, Supplier Management and Procurement, and Quality.

“I have to be the biggest cheerleader I can possibly be for Employee Involvement success,” said Dennis Stuart, San Antonio site general manager

Stuart attends daily “boardwalks” in the office and on aircraft, where teams present job status. Site leaders also host a monthly business review where three to four selected teams report their latest breakthroughs and accomplishments to leadership. Soto’s team recently presented to the business review; he said the event is a perfect way to bridge the gap between the flight line and executive office.

“Us being on the ramp and management being in the office puts a natural barrier between us,” Soto said. “Presenting to leadership brings us together in one room. We’re all on the same level. It feels great to talk to our program managers, call them by name, and that they remember our names as well.” ■

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RON BOOKOUT PHOTO

C-17 Employee Involvement team leader David Soriano (pink shirt) briefs San Antonio site leader Dennis Stuart (white shirt) and others during a recent EI team “boardwalk.”