



Discontinuing Supervisor Activities Increases Productivity

case study



"We've used testing of multiple ideas over fourteen times, and it's starting to become more of a culture within our corporation. You hear people say, we should test that. You have to actually track the test, you have to add the metrics, you have to measure," says the Vice President Network Opera-

tions for a major telecommunications company in describing the culture of testing for improvement that his company is developing.

"We're one of the top telecommunications companies in the U.S. We have billions of dollars in revenue and tens of thousands of employees, just to give you some context," explains the Vice President.

While his company has performed experiments testing many ideas, this project was a little different. "This project involved the field supervisors who actually manage technicians that install DSL lines and your phone service," he says. "We want our supervisors in the field seventy percent of their time, but we have supervisors that were spending almost eighty percent of their time answering emails, sitting in the office, and not with their technicians. We had about a thirty-three percent turnover rate of this particular group. We needed to be able to unburden them from certain administrative activities that directly impact their daily lives, but at the same time maintain or increase the productivity of our field technicians."

The experiment was designed with job efficiency as the key measure. The experiment focused on finding those administrative functions that could be eliminated and cause job efficiency to increase. "There were more than 100 ideas that we talked about. We actually then instituted the execution within four weeks. We've implemented ten changes based on the testing," says the Vice President. "We thought that if you take certain activities off the supervisor's plate – things that they have to worry about – they would affect productivity. They didn't. The classic case that did matter was a short daily meeting for the supervisors that we implemented a couple years ago. The tests showed that it was not as effective."

Ken Holland, Customer Relations Vice President for QualPro Inc., stated, "This was a somewhat unique MVT[®] experiment in that every test idea was to stop an activity. This experiment is a great illustration of the fact that a large portion of business activities can be a waste of time and money, or even hurtful to performance."

The Vice President concludes, "The test will show a ten percent increase in productivity and job efficiency. Powerful! Our attrition rate on a frontline supervisor is now not much more than our regular standard population of our employee base. It's really made a big difference."