

10 *DO's* and *DON'Ts* of Suggestion Plans

By Lesia Mahon

Do:

1. Ensure that the plan is aligned with organizational goals and functional initiatives
2. Ensure that all functions understand the plan - make the plan part of the culture of the organization
3. Market the plan to all employees - promotions, flyers, training, etc.
4. Make the plan and ideas visible to the organization
5. Make the process and rules clear, simple and understandable
6. Have evaluators trained on how to respond quickly to suggestions - whether implemented or not
7. Provide short, tactful but detailed responses to each suggestion
8. Visibly recognize all suggestors even those that do not have implemented suggestions
9. Ensure that the correct few metrics are in place and reported on in a consistent manner
10. Re-evaluate the plan on a regular basis to ensure that it aligns with the goals and initiatives of the organization

Don't:

1. Expect the plan alone to solve your organizations problems
2. Forget to get input from all functions on development of the plan
3. Be afraid to say no to suggestors if their ideas do not fit with the goals - with a good explanation
4. Let the wrong area / function / group provide answers to a suggestion
5. Let suggestions go unanswered - even if the answer is no
6. Let problems compound without bringing them to the attention of interested / responsible party
7. Expect the same quality or quantity of suggestions from all areas - different staffs have different needs and different levels of control
8. Run the program without continuous improvement and benchmarking of others
9. Make the program mandatory for everyone to participate
10. Don't run the program manually - automate it and expose it so that data collection and reports can be consistent and so that others can learn from the ideas

Lesia Mahon managed a corporate-wide suggestion program in the Automotive Industry covering over 40 facilities. She successfully led and facilitated diverse teams in the development and streamlining of business processes plus process re-engineering in various functions. This included: engineering, information technology, manufacturing, quality network and program management. She has extensive experience working with a range of customers including: suppliers, plant operations, General Motors and unions. In addition to her experience in all phases of project management she has developed curriculum and effectively taught classes at both the corporate and college level (including undergraduate and graduate courses). Lesia is currently an Adjunct Instructor at Walsh College in Michigan, teaching Business Information Technology courses.