



Event: Benchmarking Visit with Grand Rapids Fire Department
Speakers: Mic Gunderson, Eric DeLong, Rob Pease and Brad Brown
Date: February 8, 2013
Location: Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids



The Michigan Lean Consortium (MLC) partnered with the Grand Rapids Fire Department on February 8, 2013 for a benchmarking visit.

A big thank you to GVSU for hosting this event and Brann's Kitchen 67 for providing refreshments during coffee breaks and hosting After Event Networking

We were cautioned: to be prepared to laugh, learn and rejuvenate our passion for lean! For those who braved the weather conditions to attend the event, the main objective was met!

The stage set by the City of Grand Rapids Deputy City Manager who provided a macro perspective towards the push towards sustainability, current progress with lean and exciting future projections for the city. The focus then switched to a single department and how critical the Grand Rapids Fire Department is regarding the overall city's success. The main story was GRFD's lean attempts with examples of tools and their appropriate and sometimes nonconventional application as they navigate through the exciting world of lean. Many times in business, government or healthcare, outside collaboration and views are needed to define the root cause of a problem or correct one that's been identified. The GRFD has been working closely with the executive director of Kent County Emergency Medical Services (KCEMS) to do just that. The following people spoke at the event:



Eric DeLong has been with the City of Grand Rapids since May of 1995, first as Assistant City Manager for Public Works and then Deputy City Manager since November of 1999. Mr. DeLong coordinates policy and direction for the approximately 420 employee, over \$110 million Design and Development and Enterprise Systems Service Group and directs state and federal legislative



activities for the City along with leadership roles in the City's Lean Thinking and Sustainability initiatives.



Mic Gunderson has been in emergency services for over 30 years with third service, fire rescue, private and military EMS organizations. He is the president of IPS, a systems and process design and improvement firm that specializes in services to EMS, fire rescue and healthcare organizations. He is currently serving as the executive director of Kent County EMS, charged with ensuring efficient and effective medical oversight for 608,453 people spanning 873 square miles.

Rob Pease has been involved in the art of fire protection since 1993 when he served as a nuclear engineer with associated firefighter duties in the United States Navy while serving aboard the USS Columbia. After leaving the military, Rob entered into several private sector positions spanning from field crew supervisor to production manager of a large industrial plant. Following in his father's footsteps, he entered the Grand Rapids Fire Department as a second generation firefighter in 2003 and spent several years on busy engine and ladder companies. In 2008 Rob spearheaded the GRFD's



accreditation efforts while simultaneously earning a Bachelor's degree in business. He was promoted to the position of Strategic Planning Officer in 2011 and is serving as a Lean champion for the organization.

Brad Brown entered the fire service in 1996 in Greensboro, NC, an ISO class 1 and internationally accredited agency. After working on a downtown engine company for several years he moved to Grand Rapids, MI in 2003 and began work at the GRFD. Brad has a lifelong passion for learning which has helped him attain associate degrees in fire protection technology and fire prevention/investigation, a BBA in Fire Service Management and a Master's degree in Executive Fire Leadership all while working as a full time firefighter. Utilizing his formal education, he has incorporated many private sector practices into the fire service in his role as a Strategic Planning Officer. Brad enjoys sharing the innovative work of the city and serving as a Lean champion for the fire department.

Interactive examples were used throughout the presentation to get us out of our chairs and have fun with lean. Kitchen 67 sponsored both coffee breaks which were used to demonstrate flow and value stream mapping. We were all asked to write down our takeaways. Ultimately Brad said it best: "Lean Works".

The day did not end there. Many of the participants and some spouses attended the After Event Networking Opportunity at Kitchen 67 to network and continue discussions while enjoying delicious appetizers and beverages.



[See photos from the event on Facebook.](#)

The mission of the MLC is to offer a diverse network of knowledgeable lean professionals who come together to share innovative practices. The organization aims to create a lean culture in Michigan to ensure sustainable competitive advantage, which could translate into healthier businesses that offer more job opportunities leading to economic growth in the state.

The charter members of the MLC include: Amway, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, DTE Energy, Johnson & Johnson, The Lean Learning Center, Northwestern Michigan College, the Oakland University Pawley Lean Institute and the Michigan Shingo Prize through The Right Place. For more information, visit www.michiganlean.org.