

KAIZEN RESULTS

Ohio taxpayers to get critical tax appeal decisions 245 days faster on average

IN BRIEF: The Ohio Board of Tax Appeals has a nonstop workload, receiving thousands of appeals each year. Efficiency is key, but so is thoroughness. Each appeal must be judiciously reviewed and resolved. So BTA formed a Kaizen team to analyze the current approach and identify ways to make the process simpler, faster, better, and less costly.

MAJOR STREAMLINING: The new process will consist of 45 steps compared to 170 steps with the previous approach – a 74% reduction.

HALF THE TIME: The new process (from submission of an appeal to the decision being approved by Board members) will take an estimated 295 days on average. That cuts the processing time nearly in half.

REDUCED COSTS: Reductions in paper expense and other office costs will yield annual savings of \$30,000.

Kaizen Event RESULTS SCORECARD	BASELINE	PROJECTIONS	
	Key process measures, gathered at the start of the Kaizen event	Projected measures once all improvements are in place	PROJECTED CHANGE
PROCESS STEPS	170	45	74% reduction
DECISION POINTS	28	8	71% reduction
DELAY POINTS	16	3	81% reduction
Overall Process Time	540 DAYS	295 DAYS	245 DAYS

Up to a 45% reduction in processing time

DETAILS

The Ohio Board of Tax Appeals serves as Ohio's administrative tax court. Its mission is to provide taxpayers and taxing authorities with an accessible, fair, and efficient appeals process and to resolve appeals in a timely and judicious manner. BTA does this by facilitating settlements or by issuing comprehensive written decisions, which are based upon Ohio statutes, case law, and Board precedent.

It's an important mission made challenging by sheer volume. In one recent 12-month period, BTA decided 7,682 cases and received 5,294 new appeals.

Staff navigate and physically manage a mountain of paperwork and complex IT systems – as well as ever-moving hearing dates to get people to either resolve their appeals, or come in for hearings as quickly as possible. After that, staff write decisions that must be similarly routed through the office, and then back to the public.

With their work characterized by so much time-consuming complexity and excess of paperwork, BTA formed a Kaizen team to analyze and streamline the full process – from an appellant submitting a



Team members: AJ Groeber (Team Co-Leader), Brad Arnold (Team Co-Leader), Doug Palm (Team Co-Leader), Diane Guiler, Jim Williamson, Therese Schumacher, Carrie Young, Debbie Patterson, Christine Brothag, Marge Brewer (Taxation), Paul Staley (ODOT), Marina King (Taxation), Kim Mowry (DODD).

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Notice of Appeal with the Board of Tax Appeals to a decision being determined and drafted, then reviewed and approved, by Board members.

The team's analysis of the current process found too many steps (170), too many decision points (28), too many handoffs (16), and too many delays (16). On average, the process was taking 540 days from start to finish.

Next, the team got busy discussing and developing a series of major improvements: standardizing the appeal process, reducing the number of reviews, simplifying forms, improving communications, and identifying ways to make better use of technology.

The streamlined process consists of 45 steps – a 74% reduction compared to the previous approach. Decision points have been reduced by 71%, loopbacks are down by 80%, and delays are down by 81%.

One important improvement involves the docketing process. The new approach moves docketing tasks to the beginning of the process while combining similar duties.

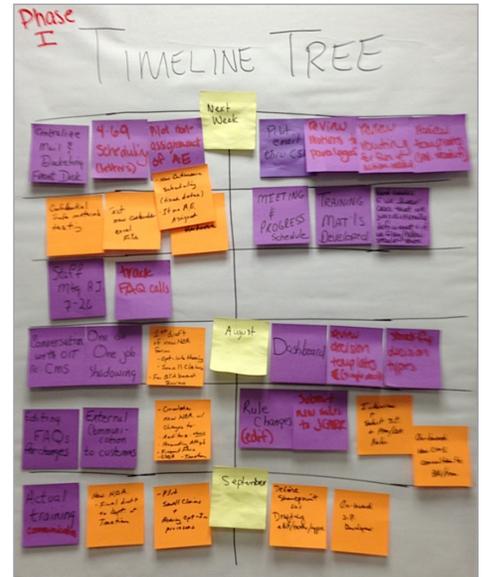
In addition, the transformed approach includes a customized fast-lane approach for appeals customers. They will be able to file a notice of appeals through an online web portal and opt in to a small claims process in order to get a quicker decision.

Yet another improvement is implementation of a self-serve case management system. This will allow all parties to access information easily and quickly, ensuring that people are well informed and up to date as the appeal decision process unfolds.

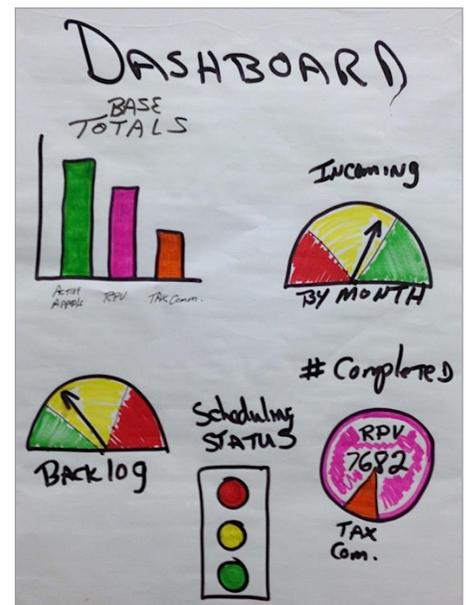
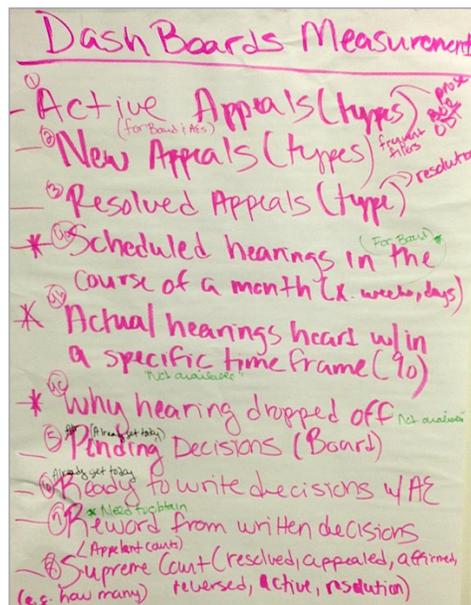
According to team estimates, the new process will average 295 days – a 45% improvement over the previous approach. Reductions in office costs and paper expense will total \$30,000 per year.

Customers will save too, since there will be fewer instances where they'll need to travel to provide documents and other information. ●

WHAT	WHO	When
* Pilot email w/in CMS	Doug/AJ	start 7/22 week of
* Pilot time stamp (+615) (attach email)	Diane/Carrie	start week of 7/22
○ Inunctional issues on (IT Flag)	Dave/Mike	start 7/24
* Confidential Information	Debbie/AJ	start week of 7/22
* No AE assignment @ time of NOA	Doug/Diane	start week of 7/22
* Pilot combined NOA/schedule letter for all appeal types 4-6-9	Doug/Jim/Debbie/AJ	start week of 7/22
* Pilot new call center process (Schedule)	AJ/Debbie/Michelle	week of start 7/22



Above left is part of the team's Information Technology Implementation Plan. Additional plans were developed for communication and training, forms, and dashboard/metrics. Above right is a timeline showing Phase I action steps and when they will occur. Immediately following the week-long Kaizen event, all notes and commitments that are in flipchart format are brought together in the form of a detailed project plan.



Most teams sketch out a draft dashboard of key measures – to be developed and implemented in electronic format after the week-long Kaizen event. Above are the BTA team's flipchart text and draft sketch of a dashboard for the tax appeals decision-writing process.