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## What it means to 'transform' DHS Untangling the red tape

### A retired executive works to streamline Oregon's Department of Human Services

By Lily Raff / *The Bulletin*

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John Ramsey is overseeing the transformation initiative at Oregon's Department of Human Services.

Over the next two years, the agency plans to implement a program called Lean across all of its departments and programs.

Lean is an approach to doing business that was developed by Toyota. It has been widely adopted by manufacturing companies around the world.

The purpose of Lean is to reduce wasted effort and wasted money. To do that, every employee in a company is trained to think critically about his or her own job and look for ways to work more efficiently.

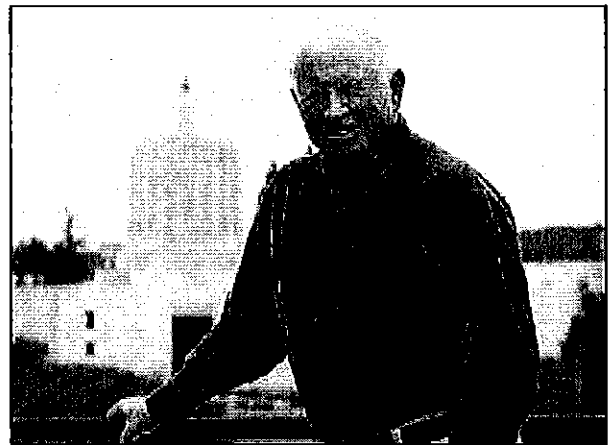
At DHS, for example, one particular employee might spend most of her time reviewing applications for the food stamp program. Lean training will encourage her to look for ways that she can more quickly and accurately determine whether an applicant qualifies for food stamps.

"Lean gives employees an opportunity to participate in how their job is done," Ramsey said. "You set boundaries — they can't give themselves a raise every week — you train them and then you listen to them. Because the people on the ground are the people who are going to come up with a better way to do things."

The idea behind the transformation is that if DHS can use its employees and money more efficiently, it can help more Oregonians.

And if the agency shows taxpayers and legislators that it is spending money wisely, Oregonians may be willing to invest more in human services.

The success of Lean, Ramsey said, depends on employees' motivation to improve the organization and managers'



Melissa Jansson / *The Bulletin*

John Ramsey Age: 69 Residence: An 80-acre farm near Medford Family: Married to Carolyn Ramsey. They have two grown children. Career history: After a brief stint as a high school football coach, Ramsey entered a one-year management training program at the aerospace technology company Lockheed, now called Lockheed Martin. He was hired as a production control supervisor. For about 35 years, Ramsey moved across the company and the U.S., serving as a vice president for nearly all of the company's major divisions. He retired nine years ago to Southern Oregon.

willingness to adopt changes that employees suggest.

"It takes great leadership," he said. "Without great leadership, this has very little chance."

— Lily Raff

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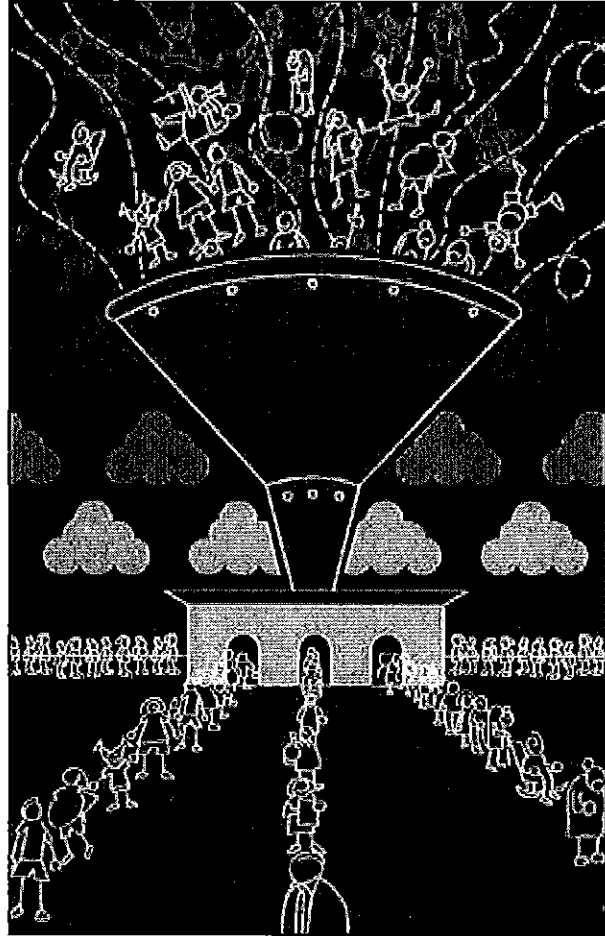


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