Employees play vital role in shaping ADOT’s future

2020 Employee of the Year Erich Batman

In the drivers seat with Nicole Merkl

AKA – The ADOT Way

What makes a good leader?

ADOT Voices: What makes a good leader?
EVERY ORGANIZATION has a culture. It shows employees and customers how you operate, what values you have and how you think.

Our culture at ADOT encompasses our AIR values, kaizen principles and Arizona Management System elements. What we have needed to do is connect these concepts together so it is easy for you and me to remember what makes up our ADOT culture.

At the November 2020 Leaders Connection conference, I shared my vision of our ADOT culture to nearly 800 leaders of our organization. I gave it a name, AKA – The ADOT Way. I believe it embodies the way we do things at ADOT and how we operate.

So, here is the best way to remember what each letter represents in AKA:

A STANDS FOR OUR AIR VALUES – Accountability, Integrity and Respect. I am proud of everyone knowing and embracing our AIR values.

K REPRESENTS OUR KAIZEN PRINCIPLES – process and results, total systems thinking and no blame/no judgment. These principles aren’t new, as we have been incorporating them in our daily work. With nearly 20,000 kaizens implemented in this agency in the last three years, I know you are finding creative ways to improve our processes to better serve our customers.

We are excited to roll out our campaign to officially introduce AKA - The ADOT Way! We promise to make the campaign fun, engaging and inspiring. Please visit the AKA - The ADOT Way page on ADOTNet, where you will find resources, success stories and much more.

Every organization has a culture. At ADOT, it’s AKA – The ADOT Way!
**HEN ADOT** Director John Halikowski introduced AKA – The ADOT Way at the Leaders Connection conference in November 2020, he said the goal was to build a recognizable framework that gives all ADOT team members a way to talk about ADOT culture.

In other words, ADOT’s culture already exists — it’s the way we strive to do things at ADOT, and it’s how we operate. Because that culture is based on three different foundations, it can be difficult to explain it all in a comprehensive way.

Until now…

With the launch of AKA – The ADOT Way, we now have a clear way to discuss our agency’s AIR values (accountability, integrity and respect), Kaizen principles and Arizona Management System elements. It’s a universal way for everyone to share their understanding of what makes up our ADOT culture.

ADOT’s culture isn’t new — there’s just a new way to talk about it! In fact, you’re already doing things The ADOT Way just by respecting each other, solving problems and serving our customers.

Take a look at the flowchart to the right and see some examples of how you’re already exhibiting ADOT’s AIR values, Kaizen principles and AMS elements. For even more, visit the new [AKA – The ADOT Way web page](#) on ADOTNet, and be sure to check back often for more content.

~ Angela DeWelles, Senior Communications Specialist

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**Behind the design**

**TALKING ABOUT ADOT’S culture is one thing, but representing it in a recognizable, meaningful way is a totally other situation. ADOT’s Graphics Services team took on the challenge and created several potential logos for the new AKA – The ADOT Way campaign.**

Nearly 800 ADOT leaders voted on the logos during the 2020 Leaders Connection conference and chose the one you see on the left. The logo, created by Graphic Designer Elena Diaz, features three hexagons and a simple design that helps to define and reinforce the agency’s AIR values, Kaizen principles, AMS elements and our True North, Safely Home.
EMPLOYEES PLAY VITAL ROLE IN SHAPING ADOT’S FUTURE

From handling emergencies and improving safety to stretching construction dollars and bringing MVD services to customers, front-line employees are providing important insight about strategic initiatives to guide ADOT’s future.

More than 140 employees — representing various groups and divisions throughout Arizona — are on teams focused on each of ADOT’s 12 strategic initiatives. They are problem solvers using the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) method and other Arizona Management System tools to improve processes and eliminate waste in strategic areas across ADOT.

“Leadership tells us what and why we need to get things done. But the front-line workers show us how because they are doing the work. It’s important to have them heavily engaged so they implement the processes that will drive the strategic improvement,” said Melissa Wynn, administrator of the Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Measures Management.

With the COVID-19 pandemic upending how ADOT does business, some new multi-year strategic initiatives were created, including the Business Disruption Plan and the Work from Anywhere Program. In addition, implementation of MVD’s new MAX modernized computer system provides opportunities for additional online services so customers can avoid coming to the MVD offices.

Progress on the strategic initiatives are being discussed during virtual Leaders Connection conferences. Videos and presentations from the November 2020 and February 2021 meetings are available for employees to view on the Leaders Connection Conference page on ADOTNet.

Look for more coverage about the strategic initiatives in future issues of The Inside Lane.

~ Lori Baker, Senior Communications Specialist

2021 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The strategic initiatives listed below are excellent examples of doing things “The ADOT Way.” Employees are adapting to new concepts, using a total systems effort and highlighting a process in action. AKA — The ADOT Way encompasses AIR values (accountability, integrity and respect), kaizen principles and Arizona Management System elements. They are critical for crafting effective agency-wide strategies supporting ADOT’s vision: Moving Arizona. Becoming the safest, most reliable transportation system in the nation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strategic Initiative</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Business Disruption Plan</td>
<td>Lessons learned from the short- and long-term business impact of COVID will be analyzed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Features Funding Prioritization</td>
<td>The condition of ADOT’s infrastructure is deteriorating, namely bridges and pavements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Maintenance Projects Prioritization</td>
<td>Many people, including some ADOT employees and external stakeholders, are unaware of where ADOT is allocating dollars and placing resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Improve MVD Systems and Service</td>
<td>MVD needs to bring more customers into the system, especially using online resources. More innovative features and upgrades need to be added to the MAX system with ongoing technical fixes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Increase Use of Tiered Huddle System</td>
<td>Problems are not consistently documented on registers or escalated to overcome obstacles to problem-solving efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Operationalize IT Governance and Standards</td>
<td>IT service requests need to be aligned with the new IT Governance and Standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Optimize ADOT Facilities Footprint</td>
<td>Processes need to be improved for workspace optimization, workspace management and to a Facilities Advisory Committee.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Policy Assessment and Management</td>
<td>Many divisions have policies but there is no agency-wide line of sight or review about whether policies are necessary or current.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Core Business Process Mapping</td>
<td>Visibility of business practices need to be improved to increase the establishment of standard work, improve results and help drive continuous improvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Web Redesign</td>
<td>ADOT’s website needs to be modernized and updated to improve user experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Work From Anywhere Program</td>
<td>ADOT has more than 1,000 employees teleworking without a comprehensive program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Align Leaders and People Systems to AKA - The ADOT Way</td>
<td>The current state of people programs and systems available in the agency needs to be evaluated to align those programs and leaders to AKA – The ADOT Way.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The number of kaizens submitted by ADOT employees so far this fiscal year is 3,747.

For a complete breakdown by division, visit the Office of Continuous Improvement page on ADOTNet.

**Excellent Employee of the Year a model for all of us**

Being named a top employee among 3,700 workers is a special feat, especially given the fact that ADOT has many exceptional employees. Program Project Specialist II Erich Batman lives up to his legendary name, winning the 2020 Employee of the Year last November.

He may not have a cape, but he is a super employee, a shining example of AKA — The ADOT Way. He walks the walk when it comes to AIR values, kaizen principles and the elements of AMS.

Batman’s attitude and outstanding customer service are indicative of AIR values — accountability, integrity and respect.

Lionel McFarlane, maintenance operations manager, nominated Batman for this award, saying “Erich has a positive attitude and adapts well to change. He worked through each customer request with unsurpassed professionalism, politeness and promptness to ensure that Equipment Services delivered superior customer service that consistently met or exceeded the needs of our customers.”

As a member of the Administrative Services Division team that created and distributed fabric face coverings to state employees, Batman personally assembled more than 1,800 face coverings. He receives kudos from customers across state agencies doing business with Equipment Services, from Game and Fish to the Secretary of State’s Office.

Batman is also an Arizona Management System ambassador. He was part of a team who presented AMS modules to staff with the Arizona Health Cost Containment System, focusing on continuous improvement, huddles and total systems thinking.

He displayed leader behaviors in many ways. He took the lead as fleet coordinator for the transition of the Arizona Department of Administration’s fleet to ADOT. During the same year, he took on temporary roles as a supervisor for the Phoenix Service Center and the Lube Shop, stepping in where needed to help the division succeed, training multiple employees and finding ways to improve operations.

Speaking of process improvements, Batman clearly takes the elements of kaizen to heart, as well as a total systems mindset. He submitted a total of 23 kaizens for Equipment Services.

“He has gone beyond all expectations by continually seeking out and accepting all challenges in work assignments in support of Equipment Services goals and objectives,” said McFarlane.

Batman, now with the agency about seven years, downplays the attention that the award may bring.

“This is very humbling,” he said. “The credit should really go to the people I work with. I am trying to make their lives better. We work together to overcome the obstacles that come up.”

~ Kim Larson, Senior Communications Specialist

**AKA — The ADOT Way virtual scavenger hunt contest!**

This month’s contest is a virtual scavenger hunt to introduce employees to the new AKA — The ADOT Way webpage on ADOTNet. It’s easy to enter. Simply use the Google form, follow instructions, link to the webpage, and answer three questions that you’ll find exploring that page.

Deadline to enter is April 9 for a chance to win a prize! The hunt is on!
Do you hope to be promoted to a leadership role at ADOT some day? 
You can learn how to develop your skills and decide if leadership is 
the right career choice for you through the new #ADOTLeads Aspire 
to Lead program. We asked several participants in the inaugural 
cohort to share how this program has helped them.  
~ Compiled by Lori Baker, Senior Communications Specialist

At ADOT, it’s difficult to sum up anyone’s job in just a few words. 
That’s why we’re devoting space in 
this newsletter for employees across the agency to share a little bit about 
what they do every day. If you’d like to 
be featured, email us at InsideLane@ azdot.gov.

~ Compiled by Kim Larson, Senior Communications 
Specialist

Nicole Merkl has been with ADOT 
for more than 19 years, and currently manages MVD’s Specialty Plates and 
Account Support units.

How do you describe your job to 
someone outside the agency? 
The special plates team issues 
personalized/specialty license plates, disability plates and disability 
placards. The account support team 
manages account access for business 
customers, who request access to the 
new MVD website, AZMVDNow.gov.

What do you want other ADOT 
employees to know about your job? 
The account support team has 
granted website access to 5,018 
business customers since April 2020. The special plates unit receives about 
7,000 to 9,500 personalized plate 
requests per month and reviews 
them for negative connotation. 
When people inquire about new 
plate designs, I explain that there’s 
a legislative process for a new plate 
and a $32,000 implementation 
fee is charged to the sponsoring 
organization.

What do you enjoy most about your job? 
I enjoy working with organizations 
when new plates pass into law. I get 
to collect the $32,000. I enjoy trying to 
decipher a customer’s personalized 
plate meaning, especially when they 
say it means one thing and clearly it’s 
something else. The ones I think are 
clever are great but can’t be allowed, 
like PB4WEGO (pee before we go.) Parents would understand.

Do you have a specialty plate? 
I have a personalized plate that reads 
SCHATZI on a Childhood Cancer 
Research plate. Schatzi is German for 
sweetheart or jewel. We would call 
our Oma (grandma) this. I chose this 
plate to remember her and to support 
kids with cancer.

Which emoji is your favorite or 
most-used? 
Face palms and smiles, sometimes 
simultaneously.

What’s the best vacation you’ve 
ever taken? 
Aruba. If you ever go, make sure to eat 
at Wacky Wahoo’s. The Barracuda is 
delicious!