

VALUE STREAM MAPPING

The following comment was recently posted on Industry week's blog. Although exciting to see more organizations are using the tool ... we must remember that probably the companies polled by Industry Week are already leaders and progressive thinkers.

"Value stream mapping is wildly popular among IndustryWeek's Best Plants winners and finalists, as the accompanying data indicate. Among the likely drivers of value stream mapping's popularity is the book "Learning to See: Value Stream Mapping to Add Value and Eliminate MUDA." In it authors John Shook and Mike Rother describe value stream mapping, in part, as "all the actions (both value added and non-value added) currently required to bring a product through the main flows essential to every product."

Does value-stream mapping occur at this plant? (% of plants)

Year	No	Yes
2005	20	80
2006	28	72
2007	19	81
2008	5	95
2009	0	100
2005-2009	16	84

Source: 2009 IW Best Plants Statistical Profile

Unfortunately, in many cases the completion of a Value Stream Map to many organizations is deemed as an accomplishment. We must remember Value Stream Mapping is just a tool and needs to be utilized thus ... so a couple of reminders for the folks that are using the tool;

- Developing a Value Stream Map is not a destination but rather a tool
- You need to re-do your value Stream Map at minimum annually
- Use "out-side eyes" if possible so you can see the forest instead of the trees
- Constructing your Value Stream map allows folks within your organization the liberty to be "on" the business instead of being "in" the business for a few days.
- A "Current State Map" without a "Future State map" is a waste of time
- Opportunities identified during a mapping exercise can and should be quantified and developed within your business operating plan.
- Revisit your opportunities often to insure they are being implemented.

These days with diminishing resources we see organizations trying to rush through mapping exercises, when in essence they need to slow down, observe in order to go faster.

"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow."

Ronald. E. Osborn

Where Lean Thoughts can become Reality

STANDING IN THE CIRCLE

Running an Enterprise Value Stream Mapping event allows your folks to be removed from being “IN” your organization to being “ON” your organization. During this event folks need to walk, interview and document the entire value stream. The value of a mapping exercise can be significantly enhanced should you decide to add “Outside Eyes” from venues such as; suppliers, customers or fellow members from your consortium.

A favourite way of observation was shared by Robert “Doc” Hall in a Target Article ...

Standing in the Circle

Ohno coached his budding TPS leaders to carefully observe reality by drawing a chalk circle on the floor, telling them to stand in it for several hours observing reality, mind wiped clean, undistracted by things seemingly more important to do. This practice in intensive observation imbued them in kaizen thinking, which was necessary before they could coach others.

Kaizen is the core of TPS. All other techniques promote kaizen by maximizing the number of opportunities to practice it. Kaizen is learned primarily by doing; classes merely familiarize people with techniques.

Developing a few experts helps a little, but the power of kaizen is multiplied many times if the experts coach everyone else to see and solve problems. Reality is that no one becomes an expert with magic answers. The power is in the method.

Process visibility reveals problems to anyone, not just managers. When something is amiss, *workers* can quickly determine the cause and take action. Process visibility also stimulates everyone to think of still more ways to improve it. Thus empowered by the method, workers learn to self-manage processes and spontaneously improve them.

Visibility – thoughtful visibility – is a tenet of the Toyota Production System. Empty-headed gawking is insufficient. Ohno’s basic problem solving method was “to ask why at least five times,” which means that he didn’t ask people to literally confine themselves to the circle, but to dig through the clutter to see the essential problem.

Very small processes, like Integrated Circuit production, cannot be seen directly, so they are made largely through data and remote control. But even with fully gowned workers and minute processes, process visibility reveals a remarkable amount of waste.

Large dispersed processes cannot be seen all at once. When flow charting (or Value Stream Mapping) a large process, people must communicate precisely, or someone must travel around to see reality. Staying in touch with reality is the important part. The only way to be sure that a chart is up to date is to review the process frequently. In large processes, like automotive engineering change systems, someone is likely to be tinkering all the time, so that at any instant, no one knows how it really works.

The stand-in-a-circle exercise is good anywhere, for example, when studying customers’ evaluation and use of a product. It works on docks, in offices, and everywhere else.

Merely installing visibility tools doesn’t accomplish their purpose, staying connected with reality and remaining curious – always asking why and identifying problems. That takes constant practice. Although careful observation can be cultivated into a habit, it is never simple. Toyota veterans know that when observing a process for the first time, it takes several hours – sometimes days – to develop an initial grasp of it. (Seeing nothing happen in many hours may be a marvelous discovery, not a waste of time.)

“Standing in a circle” is taking the time to understand reality before acting. It is not creating some kind of model, in software or otherwise, and seeing if it works. It also counters the instinct of managers (and others) with so strong a bias for action that they always want to be making something happen – even if it is wrong.

Lean Thoughts