

Six Components to a Lean Mindset

Continual Elimination of Waste

Waste in a process is simply defined as anything that does not add value to the customer. Lean identifies 8 common categories of waste found in processes that should be eliminated to increase value to the customer. The 8-wastes are commonly referred to as D.O.W.N.T.I.M.E.

D - Defective Production: Efforts caused by rework, scrap, and incorrect information

O - Overproduction: Production that is more than needed or before it is needed

W - Waiting: Wasted time waiting for the next step in a process

N - Non-Utilized Talent: Non or underutilizing people's talents, skills, and knowledge

T - Transportation: Unnecessary movements of products and materials

I - Inventory: Building and storing extra materials/products than needed

M - Motion: Unnecessary movement of people that does not add value

E - Extra-Processing: More work or higher quality than is needed by the customer

Goals with a Broad View

The second component to the Lean mindset is all about strategy and planning. Lean focuses on incorporating long-term planning. What you do and implement today, is a foundation for tomorrow. Having a "broad view" links the purpose behind the day-to-day tasks to drive the mission of the organization.

Avoid singular focuses on the short-term goals as this can drive tasks and processes away from the broad view of the organization's mission. Some helpful questions to ask to ensure focus is on the broad view are:

"Does this reflect the department's mission?" "Will this establish a strong foundation to build upon in the future?" "How will this impact the department's values" and "How will this support the elimination of waste in our processes?"

Simplicity

Simplicity is key. Complex processes create complex problems, simple processes result in simple solutions. Simple solutions require less time and resources and will get you back to focusing on the customer quicker. Evaluate complex processes by breaking them down into smaller portions and start simplifying. The goal of simplicity is that someone with no knowledge of your department can quickly take action with minimal to no questions.

Motivation for simple:

- Reduces errors
- Easier for training and knowledge transfer
- Easier and quicker to implement
- Reduces waste

Continuous Improvement

Change is inevitable. Whether it comes from our customer's needs evolving, legislation, leadership, or policy requirements, change will happen. Processes should be evaluated often and continuously improved upon to ensure we are delivering value-added service to our customers.

Lean refers to continuous improvement as an actionable cycle of plan, do, check, and act (PDCA).

Plan: What needs to be done? What are the initial perceptions? Break down the problem, set targets, and conduct a root cause analysis.

Do: Take corrective actions and apply necessary changes identified in the planning stage.

Check: Audit the plan in action and review the results of your efforts. Ask *“was the problem solved?”* *“What was the result of the corrective efforts?”*

Act: Take follow-up actions or implement the new process. If countermeasures were unsuccessful then return to the planning stage.

Organizational Visibility

Visibility is accountability. When waste is visible and identified it leads to action, invisible waste can go unchecked indefinitely. Practice transparency and accessibility with your department. Visibility doesn't just mean being transparent with your processes and policies, it also refers to clutter-free work environments. Think of the cluttered hard drives in your computer, when files cannot be found it creates inefficiencies and increases rework.

An added benefit to visibility is that it encourages others to adopt the same mindset and keeps with the theme of continuous improvement.

Flexibility

Continuous improvement can be halted when we become inflexible to changing environments. Flexibility is the backbone of continuous improvement to ensure our departments are providing the highest value to our customers.

Being flexible means that you welcome change, you are ready for change, and you are willing to contribute to the department's mission. Flexibility also means having the right resources to act quickly when change is needed.