



Achieving and sustaining service improvements using Lean

Lean: it's more than just technique

Lean is a proven approach to improvement, originating from the Japanese automotive sector. From its manufacturing origins, the Lean approach has spread to other environments, and has been widely and successfully applied across the service sector, achieving significant improvements.

At its core, Lean helps you to think of your purpose from the point of view of the user. Then all activities are put in the light of achieving your purpose, and how the "flow" works for the user. Actions that don't achieve the purpose (adding value) are "waste" and working to remove them will increase your capacity, as part of continuous improvement. This common sense approach requires a transformation in thinking across the whole organisation from top to bottom, and both commitment and experience to bring it about.

Our approach

To give organisations an initial experience of Lean we target areas for improvement through Rapid Improvement Events (RIEs) to gain real, measurable improvement right from the start. Using Lean principles to meet the needs of our client's customers, we use a simple model to:

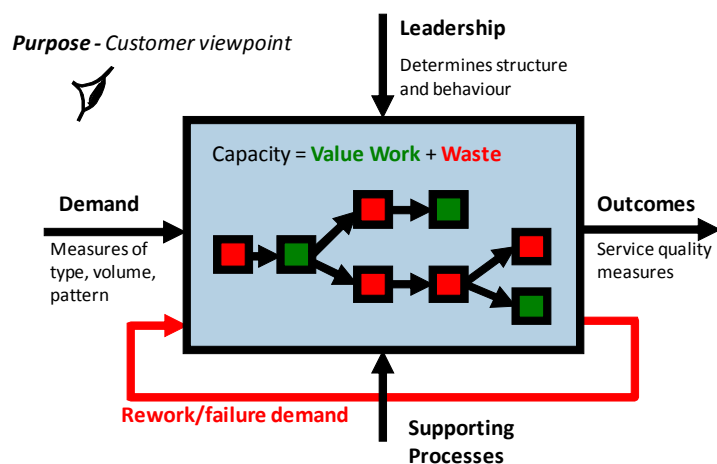
- Look at the whole flow of work which provides a service.
- Find out what happens from the customer's point of view.
- Map the whole system in a structured way, backed up by data.
- Look not just at waste, but at its causes, which must be addressed.
- Redesign flows from the analysis - led by front line staff and enabled by leaders.
- "Learn by doing" in the new system, based on new Lean thinking.
- Focus on only doing value work which serves customers.
- Work each demand to completion, learning to match capacity and manage demand.
- Establish new measures (owned by front line staff) to show improvement.



"Our broad experience within public services organisations enables us to understand the complexity of roles and the organisational relationships which are essential for delivering 'joined up' services."

Richard Ward
Director
The Consultancy
Company

Change based on knowledge, learning by doing



Client Feedback

"I thought it was going to be so boring sitting in a room. I've had my best week ever, loved it, got things done that we've wanted for years."

RIE Participant
Silentnight Beds

"The team was enthusiastic, there was a fantastic response culture from the rest of the business, it was a great opportunity for real shop-floor participation and it got results".

Mike Davies
Director
Silentnight Beds



"It allows the people on the frontline to initiate the frontline improvements."

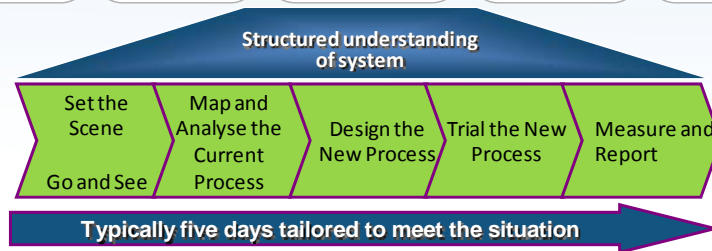
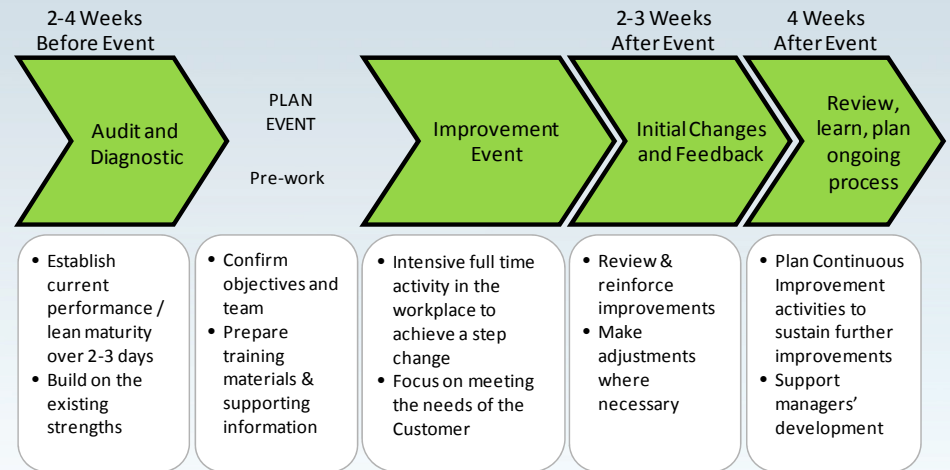
Michelle Egan
Theatre Nurse
Wrightington Hospital

"Objectives for the event were set out early on day one and throughout there was a focus on outputs that matched with those objectives. This was achieved through the organisation and skill of the facilitators who focused discussions on 'things that really mattered'. The facilitators guided the group through the process extremely well and made the event a success".

Harry Clarke
Associate Director
Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre
NHS Foundation Trust

This approach makes the improvements more effective, responsive and agile, meeting the aim of 'doing the best thing for the customer without waste'. The RIE is typically set in the context of a Service Improvement Project to ensure adequate preparation and ongoing sustainability.

"Combines those with detail of what happens at grass roots and those with authority to sanction change to gain real ownership"



Starting point: diagnostic

Defining an area of improvement and creating an effective RIE team is fundamental to the success of a Service Improvement Project. Through a two day diagnostic, our consultants identify the following: specific improvement areas; a team; the unique requirements of a situation; and the current "Lean maturity" of an organisation.

Implementing Lean through Rapid Improvement Events (RIEs)

Rapid Improvement Events (RIEs) deliver real results quickly and engage staff at all levels. An RIE team typically consists of staff taken from:

- A vertical slice through the organisation involved in the area of improvement.
- Other departments or disciplines with skills and expertise to assist.

This creates a multi-functional team, frequently tapping into a depth of knowledge and a wealth of ideas that can be converted into reality, with key stakeholders participating and supporting the RIE so that decisions can be made on-the-spot rather than postponed or referred on.

Rather than introduce large amounts of theory prior to an event, we introduce only the relevant tools and techniques for the situation, whilst ensuring that participants gain a basic understanding of the Lean approach. This practical approach of "learning by doing" engages participants from the start, with staff becoming empowered and owning the changes in a very positive way that leads to rapid, tangible benefits.

Based on a robust problem solving approach, an RIE starts with finding out what really happens from a customer perspective through to reviewing and sustaining the changes implemented during the week.



“In our experience Lean improvements falter only when there is too much focus on the tools and techniques, and the expectation of instant improvement. Lean has to be ‘lived’ continuously. This requires long-term commitment; but is ultimately the route to sustained success.”

Tim Richardson
Managing Director
The Consultancy
Company

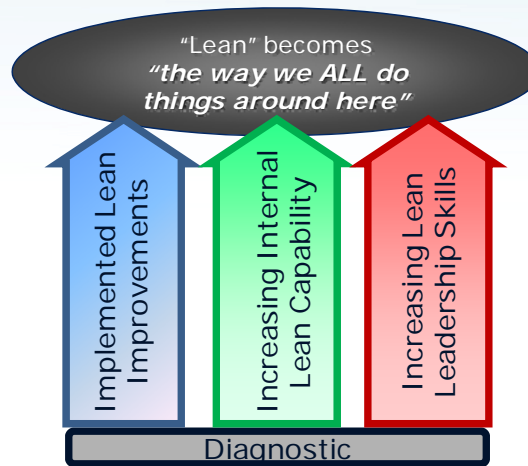
Sustaining Lean improvements

While RIEs can be an effective tool in generating service improvements, and can be repeated across the organisation, they cannot by themselves bring about the changes needed for a sustainable transformation of the organisation. Our experience, both with our own clients and from the wider marketplace, shows that without the understanding of Lean thinking and commitment from the top and middle layer of an organisation to lead involvement of people at the grass roots, any transformation process is doomed to be short lived.

Our “Lean Leadership” development workshops help executives and senior managers to develop the understanding and skills necessary to lead in this new environment.

Additionally, the organisation needs to develop its internal capability to lead Lean projects and develop the culture of ‘continuous improvement’ necessary for long-term sustainable change. Through the RIEs, we seek to identify individuals with the skills and interest to become Lean champions and facilitators. Our consultants support individuals to develop Lean thinking and the skills to sustain improvements and become potential facilitators of future Lean improvements projects.

These three interwoven pillars evolve towards a culture where Lean becomes “the way we all do things around here”.



Our experience

Our consultants all have senior operational backgrounds, and are experienced in deploying Lean techniques in both private and public sectors. The benefits we deliver are real, not theoretical; and the majority of our turnover comes from repeat business from satisfied clients.

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