COURSE MATERIALS

Service Excellence through Process Improvement

Elaine Crandall and Paul Stamper
Ventura County

CI 374
Objectives for Today

- Learn how to achieve the greatest value for your customer through continuous process improvement.
- Learn how Lean Six Sigma can lead to improved organizational performance.
- Gain a basic understanding of Lean Six Sigma tools and principles.

Employees

Complaints
- What took so long?
- Can you go any faster?
- Who dropped the ball?

Solutions
1. More employees
2. Improved employees
   - Training
   - Multitasking
   - Incentives
   - Accountability
3. Customers have to wait
   - “Manage” expectations

Customers
Customer Becomes the Problem

Before After

Service Delivery

Measurable Systemic Health Indicators

Blood pressure
Cholesterol
Waist Circumference
Body fat
Resting heart rate
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Measurable Systemic Health Indicators

- Crime rate
- Property values
- Poverty rate
- Age of the population
- Education rankings

Traditional Response

- Cut hours
- Cut people
- Cut services
- Cut programs
- Across the board budget cuts
- Hiring freezes
- Travel restrictions

The illusion of numbers
Problem with Traditional Response

- Staff overwhelmed trying to get through the same system with less people.
- Can’t get the outcomes needed by doing what we have always done.

Introductions

Introduce yourself.

If your team knew how to find time or money through process improvement:

- What would you do with the extra time?
- What would you do with the extra money?

Service Excellence Program

Objective

Encourage a county-wide culture of service excellence, continuous improvement and empirically based decision making as a means of improving quality, consistency, speed and cost of County Services.
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Are Your People Stuck?

Lean Government Exchange
Des Moines, Iowa 2009 and beyond

- Iowa
- Minnesota
- Kentucky
- Kansas
- Delaware
- Ohio
- Toronto
- Arkansas
- Alabama
- Nebraska
- New Hampshire
- South Carolina
- Illinois
- Oregon
- Oklahoma
- Hawaii
- Vermont
- Georgia
- Washington, DC
- California
- Arkansas
- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Maryland
- Rhode Island
- Washington
- City of Appleton, WI
- County of Ventura, CA
- City of Cape Coral, FL
- City of Fort Dodge, Iowa
- Shasta County, CA
- Los Angeles County DPSS, DCSS
- Kitsap County, Washington
- Cal State Channel Islands
- RTC, Washoe County, Nevada
- CalPloy, SLO, CA

Where is CPI Applied

- Environmental permits / Air Quality / Wastewater/Floodplains / Landfills / Manure management
- Corrections - Offender Re-entry / Forensics
- Procurement
- Board of Medical Examiners Investigatory process
- Veterans Home Admissions / Medical Appointments / Medication Administration / Pharmacy
- Patient flow / Hospital discharge / Health facilities
- Human Services processes and services
- Animal Services
- Child Abuse Appeals / Foster Child placement across state lines
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Ventura County Value

Get the Scoop

PWA and GSA optimizing their heavy equipment tracking and eliminating the need to purchase this equipment.

- 1 Grader = $225,000
- 1 Roller = $54,000
- 1 Backhoe = $150,000

$429,000

Breaking down silos and having teams constantly thinking of ways to save. **Priceless!**

Sheriff Forensics Dry Drug Analysis

**THEN**
- 64 days to complete
- Backlog over 200 cases

**NOW**
- 17 days
- Backlog down 50%
- Productivity up – more cases per scientist

---

LEARN. GROW. ACHIEVE

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Errorless process to send case files to DA = 1 FTE Social Worker

### Mean Number of Days to Process Planning Director-Approved Discretionary Permit Applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permit Type</th>
<th>Baseline Metric: Average Processing Time (days)</th>
<th>New Metric: Average Processing Time (days)</th>
<th>% Change in Processing Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planned Development Permit</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Modification Permit</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parcel Map Waiver/Lot Line Adjustment</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parcel Map Waiver/Permit Merger</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Canal Clean Up

Cost Savings – by eliminating over processing $600,000 – re-purposed to canal repairs
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SIPOC

The SIPOC map provides a means to further clarify which of the inputs have the greatest "push" on the outputs.

Based on this ranking system, the following processes had the greatest impact:

- Receive requests for application
- Receive and process applications
- Enter data (Clerk of the Board)
- Reconcile and enter into Star (Assessor)
- Communication to Applicant
- Memo to set processes
- Assessment Board Hearing preparation process

Admin Side - Current State

Swimlane Map 1 of 2

COB CURRENT STATE (Swimlane Map 2 of 2)

Total Steps: 92
Min. Touch Time/Hours: 55.46
Max. Touch Time/Hours: 73.31
Min. Process Cost/1 Appl.: $2,723.70
Max. Process Cost/1 Appl.: $3,592.40
Minimum Cycle Time/Days: 136
Maximum Cycle Time/Days: 218
Admin Side - Future State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Current State</th>
<th>Future State</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Steps</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Touch Time</td>
<td>64 hours</td>
<td>23 hours</td>
<td>-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Cost/Appeal</td>
<td>$3,158</td>
<td>$1,152</td>
<td>-$2,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Cycle Time</td>
<td>177 days</td>
<td>77 days*</td>
<td>-100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 70 days required for notifications and responses

Found Money in Infrastructure

GSA Project Management Fee reduced from 12.5% to 9.9%

Cost Savings - $480,000

Cost Savings - $600,000

Annual Savings - $350,000 ...and growing

BASIC CONCEPTS OF LEAN SIX SIGMA

“It’s never too late to become what you might have been.” - George Eliot
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Origin of Lean

- Japan - post WWII - struggling economy
- Edwards Deming - Quality guru

- Brought radical ideas not yet implemented in America
  - Acceptable quality level. cost/quality not a trade off
  - Daily incremental improvement (everyone involved).
    Don't seek perfection...yet (80/20).
  - Focus - Don't improve work, eliminate waste

Focus can help you see more clearly.

Paradox

We can accomplish more, by doing less.
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Lean Six Sigma is . . .
A Combination of two schools of thought:

1. “Lean” - eliminating waste, creating process steps that add value to the customer

2. “Six Sigma” - reducing variation to ensure a standard, quality output

Cycle of Lean Principles

Seek Perfection
Specify Customer Value
Identify and Remove Waste = SPEED
Establish “Pull”
Achieve Flow

Knowledge Work 8- Wastes Product Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Work</th>
<th>8- Wastes</th>
<th>Product Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work not meeting requirements.</td>
<td><strong>Defects</strong></td>
<td>Scrap, rework, lost capacity due to mistakes, inaccurate SOP's.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions, paperwork.</td>
<td><strong>Overproduction</strong></td>
<td>Running equipment to keep equipment and people busy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting for meetings to start.</td>
<td><strong>Waiting</strong></td>
<td>Waiting for equipment, people or process to cycle, waiting for materials and parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information, paperwork and approvals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over or under staffing, talents not utilized, work load not balanced.</td>
<td><strong>Non utilization of people/talent</strong></td>
<td>Over or under staffing, talents not utilized, work load not balanced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-based data vs. electronic data:</td>
<td><strong>Transportation</strong></td>
<td>Long travel distances, unplanned premium product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers, Routing of unnecessary approvals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive backlogging of work to be processed.</td>
<td><strong>Inventory</strong></td>
<td>Making what we can instead of what customers need. High obsolescence and write-offs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much paper to be handled, processed or filed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting to deliver paperwork, poor ergonomics, chasing information.</td>
<td><strong>Motion</strong></td>
<td>Repetitive, unnecessary movement caused by poor ergonomic design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnecessary steps. Too many handoffs, lack of SOP’s.</td>
<td><strong>Extra or Over Processing</strong></td>
<td>In-capable equipment and processes. Equipment with unbalanced flow.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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See Waste, Remove Waste

Lean Process Improvement

Value-Added time is only a very small percentage of the total Time

DMAIC Cycle of Six Sigma Phases
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Simple, But Not Easy

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS - USING LEAN SIX SIGMA PERSPECTIVE

Leaders Help Others to See
Our Customers Need Us More Than Ever

➢ Divide into groups
➢ Use the easels and post-its

What are your customers complaining about right now?

Value Customers Want

The 3 most popular flavors:

Faster Cheaper Better

Do you know which one is your customers favorite?

Where Does Value Come From?

Value for customers is generated in the “value stream”.

Value Stream
A value stream usually consists of several processes which each have many individual process steps that result in a service that is delivered to a customer.
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The Lean View of Your Organization

Getting to your value streams:

1. Every agency has customers
2. Every customer gets a product/service
3. Products/Services result in outcomes
4. All outcomes and product/services are driven by processes

Conclusion
If you want to improve value to customers, improve the value streams/processes.

1. Every Agency has Customers

Who are your customers?
(Everybody has customers)

- Who buys it
- Who uses it
- Who requires it

- Two types: Brokers and End-users

- Example: License Plate, Grandpa and grandchild red rider BB gun

2. Every Customer gets Products/Services

What is a product?

Products:
1. Can be counted
2. Are specific
3. Are nouns
4. You can deliver them

What products do you produce?

- Permits
- Determinations
- Miles of road
- Tax credits
- Vaccinations
- Probation visits
- Licenses
- Welfare checks
- Treatment plans
- Jobs
- Educational sessions
3. Products Produce Outcomes

What are the outcomes of your work?
• Healthy families
• Safe communities
• A fair criminal justice system
• Better communication
• Maintained roads
• Improved fire protection
• Easier access to public services

"Outcomes" are more difficult to measure and improve than "products".

4. All Outcomes and Products/Services are Driven by Processes

What are your processes?
• Every organization provides products to customers.
• Processes and systems create these products.
• All Work is a process.
• Process steps in the value stream should flow and be designed to meet the customer's desires.
• L6S methodology is centered around improving processes not people.
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How We Select What to Improve

- Burning Platforms
- Customer Complaints
- Grass Roots
- Organizational Product Maps
  - Performance Assessments (data analysis)
- Strategic Planning

Pick Chart

There are four categories on a 2x2 matrix; horizontal is scale of payoff (or benefits), vertical is ease of implementation.

By deciding where an idea falls on the pick chart four proposed project actions are provided:
- Possible
- Implement
- Challenge
- Kill

* (thus the name "PICK" chart)
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PICK Chart

Low Payoff, easy to do - Possible
High Payoff, easy to do - Implement
High Payoff, hard to do - Challenge
Low Payoff, hard to do - Kill

Strategic Approach to Value Streams

See it! – Strategic Perspective
Focus Area: COMMUNITY HEALTH

Focus Area Goal: To be the premier health care provider in the industry.

Objective #1: Schedule surgeries within 24 hrs.

Strategy #1: Increase the capacity for surgical procedures by 40%.

What is a Value Stream Approach?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NON-VALUE STREAM</th>
<th>VALUE STREAMS (Lean Perspective)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increase the number of surgery rooms</td>
<td>• Patient flow from schedule to discharge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff up for new rooms</td>
<td>o Scheduling the rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Upgrade equipment</td>
<td>o Preparing the room, trays, equip, meds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Prep-ing the patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Information flow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Do You See?

We have a Customer Complaint

PROBLEM SOLVING

Change for the Greater Good

Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done, because he wants to do it.

- President Dwight D. Eisenhower

Kaizen
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Just Do It

- Not every idea needs a team
- Champions - do not ask for a team solution if you already have one
- Solution flags
  - More Training/Incentives
  - Add Staff
  - Improve P&P's
  - Add Inspections

Team Roles

- Board of Supervisors
- CEO
- Agency Heads
- Deployment Champion
- All Employees
  - Value Stream Champion
  - Provides inputs to how to improve their own jobs and work areas
- Team Leaders
- Team Members
- Staff

It's scientific!

\[ Y = f(x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n) \]
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Process Improvement Filter

1. \[ Y = f(x_1, x_2...) \]
2. Define Y (Charter)
3. Identify the X’s (tribal knowledge)
4. Identify the red X’s (tribal knowledge) (Vital Few)
5. Validate the red X’s (Gemba/data)
6. Analysis
7. Solution

Don’t accelerate the excavation until you are sure your digging in the right place.

Candy Metrics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer Order (How do you know what they want?)</th>
<th>5000 wrapped candies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Candies Processed (Effort-Quality)</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Failures/Defects (Do customers care?)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yield (Customer Order/Total Processed)</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Customer Complaints</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lean Metrics: Financial, behavioral, and core-process measurements that help you monitor your organization’s progress toward achieving the goals of the lean initiative.

PH Clinic Registration and Billing Process

Date Initiated: 
Revision Date: 
Event Start Date: 
Event End Date: 

Project Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>Phone No.</th>
<th>LAST NAME</th>
<th>FIRST NAME</th>
<th>AGENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department Champion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value Stream Analysis Champion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Lead</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Matter Expert</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Matter Expert</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Belt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Belt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Man Hours: 
Event Type I: Kaizen
Event Type II: Part of GTEP

Business Case

Opportunity or Problem Statement/Business Impact

Goal Statement

Project Deliverables

In Scope Out of Scope

Value Stream Champion Date

DEFINE

Contract with the team
Provides guidance.
Be sure you have the right team, that the problem is scoped, and you have measurable goals.
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Gemba/Walk the Process

Means to “GO SEE”

THE FIVE ACTUALS
1. Go to the actual workplace.
2. Engage the people who do the actual work.
3. Observe the actual process.
4. Collect the actual data.
5. Understand the actual value stream.

Exercise: What Went Wrong?

➢ What went wrong with the process?
➢ No solutions allowed yet; only problems

Model SIPOC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suppliers</th>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Customers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Y(\times)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X(\times)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Knowledge Work
- Work not meeting requirements.
- Missing information.

B - Wastes
- Defects
- Overproduction
- Waiting
- Non utilization of people/ talent
- Transportation
- Inventory
- Motion
- Extra or Over Processing

Product Work
- Scrap, rework, lost capacity due to mistakes, inaccurate SOP's.
- Running equipment to keep equipment and people busy.
- Waiting for equipment, people or process to cycle, waiting for materials and tools.
- Non utilization of people/talent
- Long travel distances, unplanned premium postal.
- Non value added time
- Non value added time but ESSENTIAL
- Incapable equipment and processes. Equipment with unbalanced flow.

Analyze for VA/NVA steps

- **Value added time (VA)** - Time engaged in an activity performed that increases its value to the customer. Must be done right the first time, the customer must be willing to pay for it, and it transforms or shapes the material or information.

- **Non value added time (NVA)** - Time engaged in an activity performed that does not increase its value to the customer.

- **Non value added time (NVA) but ESSENTIAL** - Meets the definition for NVA time, but cannot be removed.
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Exercise

Value-Added and Non-Value-Added work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value-Added Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An activity that transforms or changes material or information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer wants it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Done right the first time (no rework)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Value-Added Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities that consume resources but create no value in the eyes of the customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you can’t get rid of the activity, it is necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non Value-Added Activities

- Activities causing no value to be created but which cannot be eliminated based on current state of technology or thinking
- Required (regulatory, customer mandate, legal)
- Necessary (due to non-robustness of process, currently required; current risk tolerance)

Lean Tool Kit

- Error-proofing
- Push/Pull
- Set-up Reduction
- S-S
- Cellular Work Processing
- Work Standardization
- Reduce Variation

Control Plan Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Control

Addendum #20, 21
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Future State

- Minimized Waste and Variation
- Steps add value
- Error-proofed
- Measurement plan in place

After the Pilot/Implementation of Future State

- Ask for the results
- Communicate results with pride
- Adjust where necessary
- Look for ways to continuously improve

PREPARING THE ORGANIZATION FOR CHANGE
Dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise with it. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves and then we will save our country.

**Ideas Government is Enthralled With**

1. Not driven by profit – We’re different
2. No competitive pressure – We don’t have Customers
3. Decreasing funds means decreased service (Cut!)
4. Decreasing cost can mean decreasing budgets or de-obligating funds (Use it or lose it)
5. Quality, Cost, and on-time delivery are not normally measured (Perverse incentives: Cost recovery, WIA, grants vs. unit cost, yield, throughput)
6. We don’t have control of our environment or our customers
7. Often no process owners, may cross MANY divisional areas (Control vs. Cooperation)

**People - Culture Trumps Tools**

Must address BOTH Culture and Tools to avoid unintended consequences & less than desirable long-term success with Process Management
No Excuses

Prepare the Field

➢ More important than changing what employees do, is changing how employees think

➢ Unwavering commitment from leadership

➢ Mastery, Autonomy, and Purpose  (Daniel Pink)

HIGH PERFORMANCE
The Paradoxical Commandments of Government

1. The reward for doing good work is more work. Do good work anyway.
2. All the money you save being more efficient will get cut from your budget now and forever. Find efficiencies anyway.
3. All the bold reforms you make will be undone by the next administration. Make bold reforms anyway.
4. There is no time to think about improving what we do. Make time anyway.
5. Employees may fight the change every step of the way. Involve them anyway.

The Paradoxical Commandments of Government

6. The future is unpredictable and largely out of your hands. Plan anyway.
7. The press only cares when something goes wrong. Share your success stories anyway.
8. Legal will never let you do it. Simplify it anyway.
9. If you develop your people they will move on to better jobs. Train them anyway.
10. Your ideas will at best make someone else look good and at worst get you ostracized by your co-workers. Share your ideas anyway.

-Ken Miller

You Have a Choice

“Change is inevitable, growth is optional”

- Charles Darwin
PROCESS IMPROVEMENT AND CONTROL

Definition of a Process

*A series of steps or operations toward a desired result or product.*

- Webster’s

As Workflow

The combination of methods, people, materials, equipment, and/or measurements in a sequence of steps to create an output of value to the people being served by the process. That output can be a good, service, or capability.

Virtually all work (every step, task, activity) is part of a process.

As Coordination

The various skills, complementary assets, and organizational routines that allow the organizing and coordinating of a set of activities in a way that can maximize effectiveness and efficiency (in cost, speed, quality).

Rather than examining the tracking of materials, this approach focuses on charting the coordination of action between people, machines, and units involved in a given activity.

Key Elements of Any Process

- Defined, intended outcomes
- Customers for the outcomes (can be internal or external to the organization)
- A sequence of steps
- The intentional ordering and coordinating (through design and managed implementation) of the sequence of steps

- Independence from organizational boundaries: key processes tend to cut across functional units
- Nesting: several processes can usually be grouped together, as integral parts of more macro-level processes

PRINCIPLES of Effective Processes

1. Organize the work around the results, not tasks. Reduce cycle time by reducing the number of people and steps involved

2. Perform work in parallel (rather than sequentially), then integrate results. Requires planning and activities to be linked at throughout, not just at the end.

3. Have people who need the results perform the steps. Reduce the number of people involved in the 80% of the cases that are routine.

4. Have people who do the work make the decisions. Improves the speed and quality of decisions; reduces costs; and motivates the workforce.

5. Capture and input data only once – when they are first generated. Reduce rework; improve speed and accuracy.
6. Ensure everyone involved has access to all data and can act on them. Stops errors at the source; reduces waste and the time needed to solve problems.

7. Every process step should add value to the customer. Minimizes monitoring, checking, controlling, and quality steps.

8. Eliminate rework.

**BARRIERS to Process Improvement**

⚠️ Fear of making a mistake; failure; or taking risk.
⚠️ Inability to tolerate ambiguity; a need for order.
⚠️ Judging ideas rather than generating them.
⚠️ Jumping to solutions.
⚠️ Mistaking opinion for fact.
⚠️ Motivated to succeed quickly.
⚠️ Fixing symptoms rather than searching for root causes
⚠️ Missing the customer perspective.

**TELLTALE SIGNS of a Process Needing Improvement**

⚠️ Are customers complaining about quality, speed, cost, or availability of the product or service?
⚠️ Do you find yourself solving the same problems over and over again?
⚠️ Are people performing similar activities co-located rather than co-locating people involved in the same process?
⚠️ Are finger-pointing or blame-shifting the norms when a problem occurs?
⚠️ Are people held accountable for problems beyond their control?
⚠️ Is there agreement amongst all the participants on the process flow and purpose?
⚠️ Is customer feedback solicited?
⚠️ Is feedback solicited from the people involved in the process?
⚠️ Are steps in a process conducted sequentially instead of concurrently?
⚠️ Is there rework, rejects, or duplicative steps involved in the process?
⚠️ Does everyone involved in the process meet or exchange information regularly to monitor progress?
⚠️ Is the total process time (including lead time) measured in weeks or months (instead of hours or days)?
⚠️ Do others produce the same product or service cheaper, better, or faster?
⚠️ Has the process been reviewed in the last six months?
⚠️ Are indirect costs a sizeable portion of overall costs?
⚠️ Did anyone say “if it ain’t broke don’t fix it”? 


SOME DO’S AND DON’TS for Picking Processes to Improve

Do involve everyone, even if only at decision points. At a minimum select the process by consensus, share minutes of every meeting with everyone, obtain approval to implement improvements by consensus, and poll everyone on their perceptions of the outcomes.

Do focus on one—or a short series—of simple processes that can be improved quickly, so that everyone can learn the basics and benefit from the improvements.

Do select a facilitator from outside the team who is experienced in process improvement to serve as facilitator.

Do focus on the customer end of the process and work backwards; by keeping in mind the outcomes desired, needed improvements will become clearer.

Do select promising processes or subprocesses with “low hanging fruit” (easy to attack; have lots of rework or rejects; have a high ratio of checking and control steps to value-added steps; involve lots of steps to many different people; lots of movement back and forth; seem to function more by special cases and exceptions than by general rules).

Do focus on core processes—those processes central to the unit’s mission and have the greatest impact on quality of service.

Do remember the 80/20 (Pareto) rule and select a process for improvement which will have a significant impact on the service, product, or capability offered by the organization.

Don’t worry if you don’t reach consensus on your first try or the group cannot come to terms on the improvement of a simple, basic process; move on to another. It can be difficult for people to care enough and focus in on the small, everyday processes. Come back to it later when something has occurred that will lead people to be more motivated.

Don’t pick complex processes at first; stay with the processes that are primarily within one unit or functional area until people in all involved areas are comfortable with the tools and methods of processes improvement.

Don’t jump to solutions. Carefully examine and plan what needs improvement and the options for achieving those improvement before seeking solutions. Solve the right problems; not the symptoms.
IMPROVEMENT STORYBOARD
A repeatable problem solving/process improvement model.

STEP 1 Identify Improvement Opportunity
Identify who recommended this problem or process and why it should be addressed. Select the problem or process that will be addressed and describe the improvement opportunity. In this step narrow down the project focus. Develop a project purpose statement. If a new team is being created to address this process, a Team Charter should be created which addresses mission, code of conduct and identifies the membership.

Information is available by reviewing organization records and from involvement of the team members. Indicators of a process in need of work might include:
- Written or verbal feedback from internal/external customers
- Comments from individuals in the work area
- Unsatisfactory results
- Request from leadership or another team

STEP 2 Describe and Analyze Current Process
In this section describe the current process surrounding the improvement opportunity. Analyze the who - what - why - and how of the process. Develop a clear problem statement. Consider:
- Who are the customers? Are they satisfied? What are their requirements? Look at the problem from various perspectives.
- What are the inputs to the process?
- Create a flowchart of the process as it currently exists
- What are the process outputs?
- Identify available data related to the process. Use appropriate tools to assess and analyze the situation.

Suggested Tools
- Brainstorming
- Affinity Diagram
- Check Sheet
- Control Chart
- Histogram
- Pareto Chart
- Run Chart

Suggested Tools
- Brainstorming
- Flowcharts
**Step 3** Identify Root Causes

From an analysis of the sources of variation and causes of problems, identify the root cause(s) and select the appropriate improvement opportunity. Confirm opinions on root cause(s) with data whenever possible. Continue analysis to level of actionable root causes which will have the greatest potential impact.

Decide on the specific course of action based on an analysis of the data available and an understanding of the root causes. Look for where the organization will gain the greatest return for the resources invested in improvements.

**STEP 4** Develop a Solution and an Action Plan

After having a thorough understanding of the current process, the team should focus on developing a picture (flowchart) of the desired “to be” process. This is a creative activity that helps the team to be innovative as it addresses the course of action selected in Step 3. Explore benchmarking opportunities in search of world class models. Prioritize the options and develop an action plan around the proposed model. Follow these steps:

- Define and rank solutions to correct the root cause(s)
- Plan the change process: who - what - when - how
- Identify obstacles to achieving the results and how they will be overcome
- Prepare contingency plans
- Consider trying pilot projects before full implementation
- Establish targets for improvement and determine monitoring methods

**STEP 5** Implement the Solution or Process Change

Create a process to monitor the implementation of the action plan and the results of the change. Create milestones and measures which are reviewed on a regular basis. Confirm that the problem and root cause(s) have been decreased and the target for improvement has been met. Try solutions on a small scale to

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**Suggested Tools**

- Brainstorming
- Affinity Diagram
- Cause and Effect Diagram
- Check Sheet
- Force Field Analysis
- Control Chart
- Nominal Group Technique
- Pareto Chart
- Run Chart
- Scatter Diagram

**Suggested Tools**

- Brainstorming
- Flowchart
- Nominal Group Technique
- Multivoting

**Suggested Tools**

- Flow chart
- Gantt Chart
- Check Sheet
- Control Chart
- Histogram
- Run Chart
determine what works well and what needs improvement prior to a large-scale implementation.

**STEP 6 Review and Evaluate Results of the Change**

Determine lessons learned. Identify what went planned as expected, where expectations were missed, and where unexpected results occurred. Confirm or establish the means of monitoring the change. Evaluate the results:

- Are the measurers valid?
- Is the solution having the intended effect?
- Were there unintended consequences?
- Is the team pursuing the real root cause?

Institutionalize measures which will prevent the problem and root causes from reoccurring. Activities which help standardize improvements include: training, change work or performance processes and standards, establish periodic checks on improvements.

**Suggested Tools**

- Flow chart
- Check Sheet
- Control Chart
- Pareto Chart
- Run Chart

**STEP 7 Reflect and Act on Learnings**

Act to hold the gain and continue to improve the process. Assess the results and recommend further changes and improvements. Continue the improvement process where needed. Plan what to do about remaining problems. Discuss plans for making this part of normal operations in the future. Identify other places in the organization this success could be replicated.

Celebrate team successes. Recognize the team and award them appropriately. Review lessons learned related to team performance, problem solving skills and group dynamics. Communicate project results to the rest of the organization.

**Suggested Tools**

- Affinity Diagram
- Brainstorming
- Improvement Storyboard
The Promise of Going 'Lean'

It's the latest, buzziest trend in government management. Just don't call it a fad.

By Ken Miller | May 21, 2009

In these incredibly tough budget times, you would think government agencies would be working extra hard to find ways of doing things more efficiently. Unfortunately, leaders across the country are grabbing the same old playbook — hiring freezes, travel restrictions, delaying maintenance and so on.

They're not examining the actual work being done — the operations are fundamentally the same. Instead, they're left with tired, overworked employees trying to do the same operations with fewer resources.

This approach creates an illusion of efficiency. Real efficiency is about looking at the systems — the way work itself is designed — and finding ways to streamline the work so that we do our important tasks very well in less time and with less hassle. Systems are where the costs are incurred. Systems are where the customers show up. Systems are where the value of the agency is created. And systems appear to be the last thing anyone is focusing on.

But there is one promising new fad on the horizon that may actually change this. Some of you may already be acquainted with it: It's called "Lean." Like most management fads, this one started in the manufacturing industry. In fact, it's often referred to as Lean Manufacturing. Based on the system Toyota used for producing high-quality low-cost vehicles, Lean focuses on reducing waste. In this case, that means any activity that does not add value to the customer.

Lean is the reason Toyota dominates the auto market. Lean is the reason an Iowa business can get an environmental permit up to 90 percent faster these days. Lean is the reason Missouri taxpayers get their refunds in two days — all with fewer resources. Quite simply, Lean is the best hope for actually helping government deal with the challenge of crushing demand and limited resources.

The Promise of Lean Thinking

So what make Lean so promising in government? Three things.

1. Lean actually focuses on operations. The whole point of Lean is to rethink the way we produce what we produce, to increase our capacity to provide value to those we serve. Lean recognizes that inefficiency resides in our systems and our operations — the way we have designed our work. Lean is not another planning model, measurement method or accountability system. Lean is not a pithy slogan or something you tell employees to do. Lean actually focuses on the work of the agency.

2. Lean has a measurable impact on time, capacity and customer satisfaction. That is, it actually works. Lean projects produce
amazing results, and they're often completed in as few as five days. The typical results of the teams I have worked with include 80 percent faster processes, 50 percent drops in customer wait-times, doubling capacity, reducing phone calls and, of course, savings costs. Change agents in Iowa, Maine and Georgia are experiencing similarly impressive returns.

How is this possible? I touched on the key to this in a previous column, Extreme Government Makeover. On the show "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," the team constructs a house in only seven days, as opposed to the nine to 12 months it typically takes to build a new home. How does the team do it? By focusing on all time-wasters and eliminating them. The team doesn't cut corners — the family still gets a roof. But the "Makeover" crew finds a way to work on the corners at the same time they are installing the plumbing.

That show is a perfect illustration of the opportunities in any process, government included. For almost any process, the actual labor accounts for less than 5 percent of the total time a process takes. So in a nine-month permitting process, there may be about two weeks of actual hard labor. A hiring process may involve three days of work stretched out over three to four months. Where does all that time go? Batching, bottlenecks, backlog, checking, re-checking and CYA. A Lean approach works to eradicate the lost time by eliminating these barriers. When the system runs faster, we can get more done with the same resources.

3. Lean involves employees. Specifically, the employees who work within the system being improved. We've tried employee involvement before, with suggestion programs, quality teams and so forth. While the intent of those programs was good, the focus was too small. Employees may be able to suggest ways to improve their own performance, or the piece of the process they're involved in. But systems cut across silos. Most employees can only see a part of the whole system. Therefore, what might help them personally be more productive could actually hinder the larger system. Lean projects, on the other hand, involve all the key players in a system (including the customers) to analyze the whole thing.

This fad has real promise. This fad has a chance to radically reshape government. And if I keep calling it a fad I'm going to greatly upset my friends in the Lean Government community. But that's exactly why I'm writing this column. The tenets of Lean are too important for this approach to be relegated to a mere fad. A fad is something we follow for a short time with exaggerated zeal — like the Macarena and CB radios. We desperately need "lean thinking" in government. But the way it's being introduced, it's destined for the bottom of the toy box with my pet rock, Furbee and "quality circles."

So how can we avoid this fate for Lean?

The Three Barriers to Lean's Success in Government

1. The industrial jargon is a turn-off. Having lived through TQM and reengineering in government, I saw first-hand how repulsed public-sector people get with private-sector terminology. Visions of "ISO-9000 certified factories producing just-in-time defect-free widgets" did not light a fire under government managers. The Lean terminology of waste, value stream, Toyota Production System, supply-chain, and 5S isn't helping either. All of these terms conjure up visions of cogs in a machine mass-producing undifferentiated widgets for happy customers. This is the exact opposite of how most people view their work in government.

For any of you who have read my book *We Don't Make Widgets: Overcoming the Myths That Keep Government From Radically Improving*, these arguments will sound familiar. And they are precisely what I wrote the book to address. The Lean concepts — increasing capacity, making processes flow more smoothly and understanding what customers value — all can have a huge impact on government performance. But only if people in government believe the concepts apply to them. The more we obfuscate helpful concepts with industrial-age terminology, the more barriers we put up to achieving change.

And while we're on the subject of jargon, you might want to revisit my column on buzzwords and why you should never give your shiny new change initiative a name.
2. Government executives generally don't care about operations. Most elected officials and government executives didn't join government to manage. Instead, they are driven by a deep desire to advance a cause, a policy issue or a political agenda. They get excited about bold new programs and solving big problems — not about making the widgets. But the key to results in government is a combination of innovative policy and improving the performance of operations. There has to be a balance between "bold new stuff" and improving the "stuff we already have." Right now, though, the balance is out of whack. We have too much emphasis on policies, programs, politics and people and not emphasis on our processes. So how do you get government executives and policy makers to care about operations? That brings us to barrier number three.

3. The emphasis of Lean is on the wrong thing. The current focus of Lean is on reducing waste. This is a noble intention, of course. But I fear that, unless the Lean practitioners rethink their message, they will meet the same fate as Total Quality Management. TQM struggled in government for two key reasons: first, the manufacturing jargon; and second, TQM was ultimately an elaborate solution to a problem we weren't having. The emphasis of TQM was to reduce defects. And it did an amazing job at it. The control charts, the histograms, the fish-bone diagrams all helped identify, measure and reduce defects. So why didn't government jump on the bandwagon? Why weren't there Pareto charts in every agency lobby? Because reducing defects was not the problem in government. Our biggest hurdle doesn't involve defects or mistakes. The number-one challenge facing government is capacity. Simply, we don't have enough resources to keep up with ever-expanding and ever-more complex workloads.

That's why I'm really excited about the promise of Lean for government. I have seen first-hand that this approach gets to the heart of improving government: It increases our capacity to do more good. And that's how we address barrier number two, how we get execs to start care about operations. When we improve the processes of government, we free up the capacity to take on the "bold new stuff." That's what Lean should be emphasizing — not the waste-reduction itself, but the ultimate effect that has, allowing managers to tackle the items on their wish lists.

There's a belief that when the current economic crisis lifts, we will all go back to life as normal. I'm not that optimistic. We in government have not met this crisis by fundamentally rethinking what we do and how we do it. We have met the fiscal challenges by cutting positions and freezing spending — we'll come out of the crisis with less capacity to accomplish government services than we had before.

That's why the aftermath of this budget crisis is the perfect time to use the principles of Lean to radically rethink what we do and how we do it. We should use this time to help policy makers understand the potential of improving the operations of government. Will it succeed? If we can overcome our limiting beliefs, get past the language barrier and tap into people's desire to make a difference, then we've got a real shot. In the meantime, I'm going to get my acid-washed jeans out of the dryer, put on my Snuggie and Twitter you about the progress.

Ken Miller is the founder of the Change and Innovation Agency, and the author of Governing's book We Don't Make Widgets: Overcoming the Myths That Keep Government From Radically Improving. E-mail him at ken@changeagents.info.
Where Process-Improvement Projects Go Wrong

Six Sigma and other programs typically show early progress. And then things return to the way they were.

By SATYA S. CHAKRAVORTY

What do weight-loss plans and process-improvement programs such as Six Sigma and "lean manufacturing" have in common?

They typically start off well, generating excitement and great progress, but all too often fail to have a lasting impact as participants gradually lose motivation and fall back into old habits.

Many companies have embraced Six Sigma, a quality-control system designed to tackle problems such as production defects, and lean manufacturing, which aims to remove all processes that don't add value to the final product. But many of those companies have come away less than happy. Recent studies, for example, suggest that nearly 60% of all corporate Six Sigma initiatives fail to yield the desired results.

We studied process-improvement programs at large companies over a five-year period to gain insight into how and why so many of them fail. We found that when confronted with increasing stress over time, these programs react in much the same way a metal spring does when it is pulled with increasing force—that is, they progress through "stretching" and "yielding" phases before failing entirely. In engineering, this is known as the "stress-strain curve," and the length of each stage varies widely by material.

A closer look at the characteristics of improvement projects at each of the three stages of the stress-strain curve—stretching, yielding, and failing—offers lessons for executives seeking to avoid Six Sigma failures. The discussion that follows is based on what happened at one aerospace company that implemented more than 100 improvement projects, only to determine less than two years later that more than half had failed to generate lasting gains.

Stretching Phase

When a metal spring is pulled initially, the material stretches to accommodate the increase in pressure. In much the same way, the people involved in a process-improvement project generally find themselves stretching and willing to tackle all necessary tasks in the early going.

At the aerospace company, an improvement project typically began with the formation of a team consisting of 10 to 18 members from various departments. A Six Sigma or other improvement expert was assigned to the team to guide and train them. At this stage, teams were excited to learn and apply what they were being taught.
Questions to Ask Yourself

1. Has your organization achieved lasting gains from process-improvement programs such as Six Sigma?
2. Do you pay much attention to these programs once they move past the initial stage?
3. Are you involved enough in them to judge for yourself whether they are worth continuing?
4. Have you tied employee-performance appraisals to process improvements?
5. Do you plan on keeping a Six Sigma or other improvement expert on your staff long-term?

If you answered no to any of these questions, you should understand how and why so many process-improvement programs fail. Too often, after the project expert moves on to another project and top management turns it focus to another group of workers, implementation starts to wobble. Understanding where the stress and strains are offers managers an opportunity to avoid them.

Team members collected data on their current working environment and, with the help of the Six Sigma expert, identified the changes they most needed to make to achieve their stated goal—say, a reduction in the rate of defects in manufactured parts or fewer mistakes in order writing and billing. The expert developed a "to do" list that included action items, responsibilities and deadlines and made sure needed resources were available.

Because top executives were paying close attention to the project at this stage, managers made clear to employees that the improvement initiative was their top priority. For example, producing error-free bills became more important than processing a certain quantity of bills each day.

While daily production slipped initially when the team transitioned to the new way of working, it improved when the group grew accustomed to the new process. When the team reached its goal—say it reduced billing errors by a certain percentage—the improvement project was declared a success.

The director who was spearheading the company's Six Sigma initiatives shared the teams' achievements with others in the company. Team members were given rewards such as gift certificates to restaurants, and their pictures appeared in the company newsletter. The division vice president reported on the team's success to the company's other vice presidents and to its top executives.

Yielding Phase

Unfortunately, the story doesn't end there.

If a metal spring continues to be pulled, there will come a point when the material yields as it struggles to support the increase in pressure. Though still intact, the spring becomes permanently deformed—stretched out, for example—as the bonds between atoms are broken and new ones formed.

Similarly, in the middle stage of an improvement project—when the Six Sigma expert moves on to another project and top management turns it focus to another group of workers—implementation starts to wobble, and teams may find themselves struggling to maintain the gains they achieved early on.

With the departure of the Six Sigma expert, the teams at the aerospace company lost their objective voice and the person who performed the sophisticated statistical analysis that allowed them to prioritize the tasks that most affected performance, thus needed fixing the most. Without the expert to rein them in, some team members began pushing agendas that
benefited themselves and their departments, making it harder for the team to agree on new goals.

While teams at this stage continued to look for the flaws in their current working environments, they got bogged down trying to perform the statistical analysis previously handled by the expert. Some teams started spending too much time on the improvement project, which affected their ability to meet production quotas and other daily responsibilities.

Amid the confusion and facing pressure from managers to keep up with day-to-day duties, some team members started reverting to old habits in the much the same way a person who recently lost weight might start skipping gym sessions when work and family demands heat up. The team's performance stopped improving and, in some cases, started to regress.

When reporting on the status of their projects, teams tried to make themselves look better by highlighting what they hoped to accomplish in the future, instead of what they were accomplishing now. Some team members became discouraged and started to doubt the benefits of the improvement strategies.

The improvement director, whose salary and bonus depended on the success of the company's Six Sigma initiatives, highlighted projects that were showing great progress and ignored those that weren't. As a result, company executives were unaware that some improvement teams were slowly starting to crack under the pressure.

**Falling Stage**

Over time, pulling will cause the material in one area of the metal spring to narrow, creating a neck that becomes smaller and smaller until it is unable to sustain any pressure at all. At that point, it breaks into pieces. Similarly, in the final stage of a process-improvement project, team members find themselves unable or unwilling to tackle improvement tasks, and the effort ultimately collapses.
With the improvement expert long gone and no additional training in Six Sigma or other improvement strategies provided by the aerospace company, team members became increasingly discouraged by their failure to build on earlier success. They eventually stopped caring about the improvement project, partly because it wasn't tied to their performance reviews.

As morale sagged, no one stepped forward to assume leadership of the improvement project, so the team lost interest in looking for ways to improve their current work environment. The company allowed newly formed improvement teams to poach people and resources from older teams, so the only improvements that were made were those related to safety—and even then, only the bare minimum was done. Members steadily regressed to their old ways of working, and the group's performance returned to what it had been before the project began.

With projects failing miserably, many teams reported their achievements incorrectly, giving a false sense of success. Because the director continued to communicate only about projects that were showing excellent results, it took several months for the division vice president to become aware of the widespread failures and reluctantly inform the company's top executives.

**Lessons Learned**

Four lessons from our research stand out.

First, the extended involvement of a Six Sigma or other improvement expert is required if teams are to remain motivated, continue learning and maintain gains. If the cost of assigning an improvement expert to each team on a full-time basis is prohibitive, one improvement expert could be assigned on a part-time basis to several teams for an extended period of one to two years. Later, managers could be trained to take over that role.

Second, performance appraisals need to be tied to successful implementation of improvement projects. Studies point out that raises, even in small amounts, can motivate team members to embrace new, better work practices. Without such incentives, employees often regress to their old ways of working once the initial enthusiasm for Six Sigma dies down.

Third, improvement teams should have no more than six to nine members, and the timeline for launching a project should be no longer than six to eight weeks. The bigger the team, the greater the chance members will have competing interests and the harder it will be for them to agree on goals, especially after the improvement expert has moved on to a new project. And the longer it takes to implement improvements, the greater the chance people and resources will be diverted to other efforts.

Fourth, executives need to directly participate in improvement projects, not just "support" them. Because it was in his best interests, the director in charge of the improvement projects at the aerospace company created the illusion that everything was great by communicating only about projects that were yielding excellent results. By observing the successes and failures of improvement programs firsthand, rather than relying on someone else's interpretation, executives can make more accurate assessments as to which ones are worth continuing.
Back Where They Started

Process-improvement programs often follow the same pattern that a metal spring does when it is pulled with increasing force: They progress through “stretching” and “yielding” phases before failing entirely. Here’s a look at the life cycle of seven projects at an aerospace company, with the percentage of items passing first inspection rising initially before turning back down and then returning roughly to original levels.

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Note: Data collection and analysis stopped prematurely for some of the projects, a possible sign that the teams were unable to continue with process improvements.

Source: Satya S. Chakravorty

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I was concluding a Better, Faster, Cheaper workshop last month with a wonderful set of government managers. These people were bright; they got the concepts; and their hearts were in the right place. But they felt defeated: Tired of fighting to change a seemingly unchangeable system, these folks were worn out.

They peppered me with questions that were all variations on the same theme: “Why bother? Why try?” The only answer that kept coming to me was, “Because it’s the right thing to do.” I didn’t like the answer as it left my mouth each time. It felt like a pat cliché. But as I reflected on it on the flight home I came to be at peace with it. It was the right answer. It is the only answer.

My answer reminded me of one of those viral emails I received a few years ago, a list of something called the Paradoxical Commandments, or “Anyway.” Originally misattributed to Mother Teresa (she had them posted on her wall in a Calcutta children’s home), they were in fact created in 1968 by the author Kent Keith as part of a student leadership curriculum. His 10 Paradoxical Commandments include such masterpieces as:

♦ The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.

♦ People are illogical, unreasonable and self-centered. Love them anyway.

♦ The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the smallest minds. Think big anyway.

The root of the paradoxical commandments was Keith’s effort to embolden weary change agents. The heart of his message was that change is difficult and that change agents can’t be engaged for purely selfish reasons. Said Keith:

“I saw a lot of idealistic young people go out into the world to do what they thought was right, and good, and true, only to come back a short time later, discouraged or embittered, because they got negative feedback, or nobody appreciated them, or they failed to get the results they had hoped for. I told them that if they were going to change the world, they had to really love people, and if they did, that love would sustain them. I also told them that they couldn’t be in it for fame or glory. I said that if they did what was right and good and true, they would find meaning and satisfaction, and that meaning and satisfaction would be enough. If they had the meaning, they didn’t need the glory.”

(Keith also had another piece of wisdom: “If you don’t care, you’re not going to help anyone. Unless you have a deep feeling for the welfare of the people you are supposed to lead, please, stop leading.”)

The world needs change agents. Your organization needs change agents. You can be that change agent. Not for the glory or for advancement — you probably won’t get either. Not for admiration or even convenience — the path of a change agent can be lonely and often painful as you try to help others see what is possible, prepare for what is inevitable, and let go of what has sustained them thus far. Like great artists, change agents are usually only admired after they are gone. So why bother?

At the heart of his work, Kent Keith was pointing to a bigger motivation, something that today, 40 years later, seems like an old-
fashioned notion and certainly not a phrase we use much anymore: brotherly love. As he said, “If you’re in it for other people, then helping them will give you satisfaction that having your name in lights could never compete with!”

It is easier to do nothing when you’re only concerned about your well-being. Customers in government are often hostages with no choice. Who cares if they are happy? The processes are arduous, cumbersome and get in the way of helping people. So what? The workplace policies and performance management initiatives are sucking the passion, meaning and personal satisfaction out of work. What can I do about it? The reality is that these things are all man-made. Humans created them, and humans can change them. Somebody started the ball rolling that got us here. Somebody can start the ball rolling that changes the course.

As the great change agent Margaret Meade said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Grab the wheel.

With that in mind, I give you the Paradoxical Commandments of Government. These are the reasons why changing your agency is so hard — and why you should do it anyway. Of course, commandments, like hotdogs, only come in packages of 10 (even though buns come in packages of 12), so I had to whittle down the list. I left out some of the pithier ones, such as, “The councilman’s cousin is going to get the job; try hard anyway,” and “No one will read the report you are working on; write it well anyway.” I have also by no means exhausted all the possibilities. In fact, I’d love to hear more commandments from you, my fellow change agents.

The Paradoxical Commandments of Government

1. The reward for doing good work is more work. Do good work anyway.

2. All the money you save being more efficient will get cut from your budget now and forever. Find efficiencies anyway.

3. All the bold reforms you make will be undone by the next administration. Make bold reforms anyway.

4. There is no time to think about improving what we do. Make time anyway.

5. Employees may fight the change every step of the way. Involve them anyway.

6. The future is unpredictable and largely out of your hands. Plan anyway.

7. The press only cares when something goes wrong. Share your success stories anyway.

8. Legal will never let you do it. Simplify it anyway.

9. If you develop your people they will move on to better jobs. Train them anyway.

10. Your ideas will at best make someone else look good and at worst get you ostracized by your co-workers. Share your ideas anyway.

Ken Miller is the founder of the Change and Innovation Agency, a firm dedicated to helping its clients radically improve. Ken was named one of the country’s top change agents by Fast Company Magazine. He is the author of two popular books: We Don’t Make Widgets and The Change Agent’s Guide to Radical Improvement.

Once Deputy Director of the Missouri Department of Revenue, Ken transformed the department into one of the few government agencies nationwide to be honored as a State Quality Award winner. The Department also reduced tax refund issuance time by 80 percent (the fastest in the nation) and cut wait times in motor vehicle offices by half.

Ken was later named Director of Performance Improvement for Missouri State Government, where he led award-winning performance measurement initiatives and a series of transformation projects saving more than $200 million overall.
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