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PRINCIPLES OF CONTINUOUS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT



01

DEFINE HOW WORK IS BEING DONE

You can't improve the work if you don't know what that work is or what it looks like. Therefore, any continuous process improvement initiative hinges on the effort you put into discovering, documenting, and digitizing your workflows to create a baseline and visualize how work is performed.



02

UNDERSTAND YOUR PROBLEM & DEFINE YOUR OUTCOME

You must define your desired outcome and understand the problems with a given process before making any modifications. Identifying what you hope to accomplish via process improvement and rectifying it is the only way to drive the benefits you want to achieve.



03

CONNECT YOUR PROCESS IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES TO YOUR BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

Even at the granular process level, process improvement should always be connected to the over-arching business objectives like cost reduction, increases in efficiency, digital transformation, etc., to justify the effort and demonstrate explicit, tangible results.



04

MAKE PROCESS IMPROVEMENT CUSTOMER-CENTRIC

It's always a good practice to put your customer at the center of everything you do. In this context, the customer can be internal customers, your shareholders, or the external users/consumers of your output. Whatever the case, any changes you make to processes should be tied to how they benefit the customer.



05

MAKE SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS & PROCESS OWNERS A VITAL PART OF CONTINUOUS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

The knowledge of those who execute and own the processes is integral to any continuous process improvement initiative. Their collaboration shouldn't just be limited to the definition phase of process excellence—it should also be a key part of identifying the problem and defining the solution, leading directly into the next principle.



06

EMPOWER EMPLOYEES AND USE THEIR IDEAS

The process owners and the employees executing the workflows should always be involved in helping process analysts understand the problems with the process and especially collaborating with them to find ways to improve the process. Leaning on them also makes the SMEs more engaged in continuous process improvement and facilitates their buy-in, eliminating employee resistance when it comes to implementing modified processes.



07

FOCUS ON INCREMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS OVER MASS CHANGE

One common misconception about continuous process improvement is that it's about massive changes, and that's not the case at all. Continuous process improvement relies on small, incremental changes that move processes towards excellence.



08

CONTINUOUS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT IS NEVER-ENDING

Continuous process improvement is synonymous with the Kaizen principle, where small, endless changes will yield significant ongoing business benefits.

When a singular process is improved, it must be revisited in the future and have further improvements applied to it to maintain momentum and continue the process of never-ending operational excellence.



09

MEASURE, MONITOR, REPEAT

Like any other business activity, continuous process improvement must be measured and monitored to ensure its intended returns and benefits are being realized. The small incremental changes applied to your processes must be assessed and scrutinized continually.