



August 2013

Remove the bad steps in a process BEFORE you automate

Automation can be key to business efficiency, but only if it's done right. Before IT staff performs the application development magic, simplify your process by removing waste. It's just plain easier to automate a simple process than a complex one, and the greater the complexity, the greater the difficulty and cost. Plus, once a process is automated, it is usually difficult to change. How often do we hear that a new system "doesn't work," "doesn't meet our needs," or "is not user-friendly"? Why is this? Often it's because process wasn't streamlined **before** automation and bad processes were allowed to creep into the new system. Continuous improvement is the answer and IT staff will certainly be very happy to support you in this approach.

Simplifying Process

At the most basic level, simplification is merely a review of the process to identify and remove unnecessary steps. Every process, even the best, contains both value-added and non-value-added steps. The value-added steps are those that directly contribute to accomplishing the purpose of the process in the eyes of the customer or end user. All processes need to be thought of in terms of the customer's needs (and if a process doesn't have a customer or end user, then it has no value and should be eliminated immediately).

How many non-value added steps in a process are okay? There are two types of non-value-added steps. While *non-value-added but necessary* activities consume resources without directly contributing to the product or service, they are required by legislation, audit, or risk requirements. (But remember that requirements are not permanent and can often be changed).

The second type of non-value added activities are those that are identified as pure waste. These consume resources and don't directly contribute to the product or service just as the above, but could be eliminated without negatively impacting the product or service. Each process has its own necessary non-value-added steps, but only those that are absolutely necessary are acceptable.

To remove bad process steps prior to automation, follow this five-step thought process for guiding the implementation of lean techniques. It's easy to remember, but not always easy to achieve:

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[Process and Automation](#)

[Board of Nursing Kaizen](#)

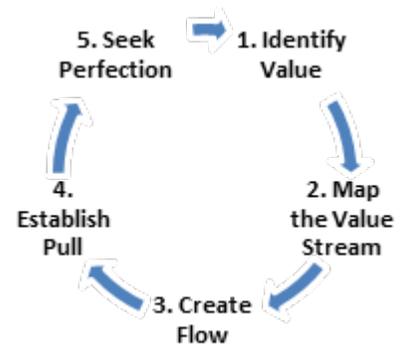
[CI User Group](#)

What's New?

The new Lean Master Contract will be available on Oct. 1. Stay tuned for more details on our [website](#)!

Space is still available in next week's [training sessions](#). Take advantage today!

1. Specify value from the standpoint of the end customer.
2. Identify all the steps in the value stream, eliminating whenever possible those steps that do not create value.
3. Make the value-creating steps occur in tight sequence so the product will flow smoothly toward the customer.
4. As flow is introduced, let customers pull value from the next upstream activity.
5. As value is specified, value streams are identified, wasted steps are removed, and flow and pull are introduced, begin the process again and continue it until a state of perfection is reached in which perfect value is created with no waste.

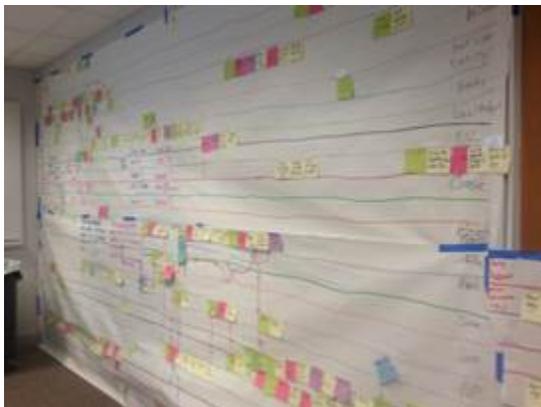


Learn more about these principles and techniques on the [Lean Enterprise Institute website](#).

Project Team Highlight: Minnesota Board of Nursing Complaint Process

The Minnesota Board of Nursing held a full kaizen event last month, taking place July 15 through 19 and focusing on the board's complaint process.

The project goal was to reduce the time it takes for a complaint to be received in intake and carried through all the way to action. All told, the board receives over 2,200 complaints per year and the team set specific and ambitious goals to process each of these complaints faster.



The future state swim-lane map for the complaints process from intake through investigation, conference and action.

Over the course of the event, the team showed great dedication and worked very hard to reach a successful outcome. They laid out a list of over 20 formal recommendations to pursue in the days ahead, which are expected to remove unnecessary steps in the process and help reach their goals.

Upcoming Events

- Aug. 13, Lean 101, **Open**
- Aug. 14-15, Facilitator Training, **Open**
- Aug. 27, Lean 101, **Open**
- Sept. 16, Lean 101, **Open**
- Sept. 17-18, Facilitator Training, **Open**
- Oct. 8, Lean 101, **Open**
- Oct. 15-16, Facilitator Training, **Open**
- Nov. 12, Lean 101, **Open**
- Nov. 13-14, Facilitator Training, **Open**
- Dec. 3, Lean 101, **Open**
- Dec. 4-5, Facilitator Training, **Open**

View all Lean events at www.lean.state.mn.us/calendar

Register for trainings on our mnlean.eventbrite.com.



The project team from the Board of Nursing with their swim-lane map.

Coming Soon! Continuous Improvement User Group

A new Continuous Improvement User Group will be established soon. This group will meet on a recurring basis to talk about CI tool development, training programs, best practices, and more. We intend for the group to function as an active working network of facilitators, CI staff, and others who will come together to share ideas, lend assistance and talk about what's working well across agencies.

Please stay tuned for more information in the near future and [contact us](#) if you are interested in participating or hearing more.
