



10 Steps to Getting Lean

Making lean process improvements isn't as difficult as you might think—try using the following ten steps.

- 1 Choose a process.** Thoroughly define the assignment, including the reasons why the process needs to be improved.
- 2 Set a goal.** Know your goal for improving the process, and make it specific and measurable—for example, increasing value by reducing the cost of the process or by increasing the benefit it produces.
- 3 Get colleagues involved.** Resistance to improvement ideas can arise over the course of the improvement process among management or staff. Even the best ideas come up against resistance. To avoid this situation as much as possible, involve colleagues early in the analysis and include them in generating solutions.
- 4 Draw the current process.** A team made up of stakeholders with different perspectives should create a value stream map (or process map) to illustrate the current process.
- 5 Analyze for deficiencies.** Using the same team, identify areas of inefficiency, redundancy, conflict, or where problems or frustrations arise.
- 6 Consider alternatives.** Make recommendations on how to avoid problem areas and create a better process. Try to design the ideal process from the customer's point of view.
- 7 Prepare an action plan.** Identify how to get started in implementing your chosen solution. Recognize that all changes are not immediate and consider short-term and long-term strategies.
- 8 Identify who is accountable for action.** Your action plan should assign tasks to individuals and place realistic timelines/deadlines for completion.
- 9 Measure for success.** Determine how you will both measure and communicate progress in implementation to all involved stakeholders.
- 10 Keep going.** A successful Lean event will start to build momentum for more improvement projects. Debrief on the process to identify areas you would change for the next effort and schedule time to start over new a new process. Over time, it might also make sense to re-analyze the same process for additional improvements that may have seemed out of reach the first time through.