EXPERT TIPS

Process Mapping…Not Just For Manufacturing
A Proven Analytical and Communication Tool

Process Mapping is tool developed by General Electric to improve their bottom-line business performance. A V. Daniel Hunt notes, "We believe that we know our business processes, but in reality, most managers do not really understand what their processes are or whether they can be improved, simplified, or eliminated."

A GE Example from Mr. Hunt:

"At the General Electric Louisville appliance facility, process mapping showed that while a fifth of the parts in any given appliance model were unique, only 5% were expensive enough to substantially affect inventory costs. General Electric found that it could speed manufacturing and cut costs by keeping ample stocks of the cheap components while working out a just-in-time program with suppliers to quickly deliver the other parts as needed. The biggest gains came from controlling the sequence in which parts were delivered from a plant's loading dock to its assembly line."

Where To Use Process Mapping

Process mapping can be used in all areas of an organization, not just in manufacturing. Your processes continue to move along whether you pay attention to them or not. You have two choices—ignore them and hope they will do what we wish, or understand and manage them. Here are some examples of possible business process improvements you can make using process mapping.

- Eliminate duplicate activities
- Combine related activities
- Eliminate multiple reviews and approvals
- Eliminate inspections
- Simplify processes
- Reduce batch sizes
- Process in parallel
- Implement demand-pull
- Outsource inefficient activities
- Eliminate movement of work
- Organize multifunctional teams
- Design cellular workspaces
- Centralize/decentralize,
- More…
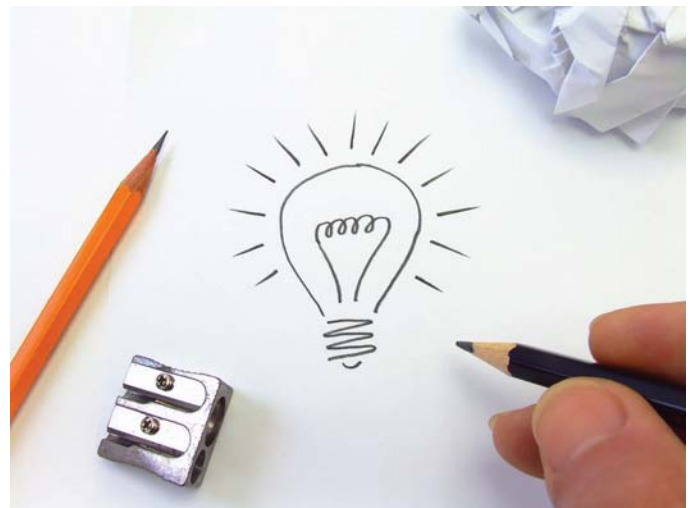
Your business is only as good as its processes. Have you established goals for each key process? Have you documented your processes? Are your process goals linked to your organization's strategic goals? Do your processes meet your customers' expectations for performance and quality?

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