

Attachments:

A printable version for your communication or huddle board

High-reliability health care: getting there from here. Chassin MR, Loeb JM: Milbank Q. 2013; 91:459-490

-Richard Zarbo, MD

Wednesday's Words of Quality

Lesson #3

Role of the Manager/Supervisor in a Continuous Improvement Culture

Everyone desires Continuous Improvement. Who doesn't want things to be ever better? Especially when we are talking about a human life. But things don't get better permanently by wishing or sporadically placing a bandaid on a problem.

Our experience informs us that Continuous improvement is about eliminating the problem in a disciplined and scientific manner, based on trained observation, knowledge of common failure points in processes and data that tells us about the root cause and demonstrates success from changes made. Continuous improvement is about testing changes rapidly, again and again until the desired outcome is sustained. This is the scientific basis of Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA).

Desire the outcome of Continuous Improvement but don't know what or how to do this?

Well, as the manager or supervisor you are the key. Your functional role and support in a continuous improvement environment are the basis of success or failure in this new system of work that expects "quality to be everyone's responsibility" as Dr. Deming stated. As the designated leader you have always been expected to assure quality in the people and the work you oversee.

But when this responsibility is owned by just a few people, success in improvement is often sporadic, slow, frustrating, un-coordinated and often with a wrong or un-sustained fix. So a better system is needed to achieve continuous improvement.

Enter Lean systems of management that we discussed previously in WWQ and the Silver Certification Training that get you well beyond wielding an isolated improvement tool at a persistent problem. This is your new focus to obtain improvement of the work by those whom you oversee as this is ultimately your responsibility as manager or supervisor.

Dr. Deming's prescription for a cure of poor quality identifies ***the manager and supervisor's key job to work on the system of work to achieve continuous process improvement in product and services delivered.***

In summary, the Deming-style manager must incorporate the following into their leadership routine:

1. Ensure a work system's consistency and reliability

You need metrics that define success in your work system and outcomes. More often than not you will need to create this.

2. Bring level of variation in your operations within predictable limits

Achieve this from tracking and sharing your metrics with deeper knowledge of failures from root cause analysis as team opportunities to redesign how the work is done. Daily Management is the system you need to implement for the critical failing metrics.

3. Identify opportunities for improvement

Engage your people in identification and capture of work deviations or non-conformances so that all can see, track, trend and measure what is failing the customer expectation. Deviation Management is the system to identify all that does not meet the expectation from the work.

4. Enlist the participation of every employee in improvement

Educate, train and expect participation from your employees to help improve the work as well as do the work. Use Daily Management as a huddle focus with delegated ownership for each metric followed and group participation in suggesting countermeasures.

5. Give those you lead the practical benefit of your experience

Continually share your learnings, new expectations and understanding of improvement and methods with your team. If it's not important to you, it won't be a priority for them.

6. Help them chart improvement strategies that define success and spread new knowledge

Consider visual means of actually charting improvement project progress to engage, educate, recognize and reward your team as you adopt the expectation of “we are here to the work and to improve the work”.

What does your success as Lean Manager look Like?

Here is my Lean manager’s checklist for you to consider and self-assess your effectiveness.

- **Move from Rote Workplace to Educated Improving Workforce**
- **Move from Reactive Crisis Management to Proactive Problem Solving Prioritized by Metrics**
- **Move from Snap Executive Solutions to Thoughtful Team Ownership for Problem Solving**
- **Move from Guessing at Solutions to Data Driven Solution Testing**
- **Move from Sporadic Leader-led Improvement Projects to Continuous Improvements by Workforce**
- **Move from No Team Knowledge to Deep Root Cause Understanding of the Work and Opportunities to Improve**

How does this relate to High Reliability?

Chassin and Loeb of The Joint Commission recognize the culture of Lean as a component of “robust process improvement” that should be pursued for health care to be effective in achieving high reliability exhibited by consistent excellence in quality and safety. Inferior quality and inconsistent or unsafe work practices are well addressed by the philosophy, principles, quality systems, methods and accountability for continuous process improvement that we share here.

Next WWQ: Lesson #4 – Waste Elimination, Less is More. Redesign Lessons from Lean