5 Steps to Better Continuous Improvement

What is Continuous Improvement?

The ongoing effort to improve products, services and processes to drive efficiency, effectiveness and overall quality.

What Does That Mean?

Most organizations struggle to improve continuously. Instead, they fight fires until forced to change. To keep up with shifting priorities, they must improve how they improve.
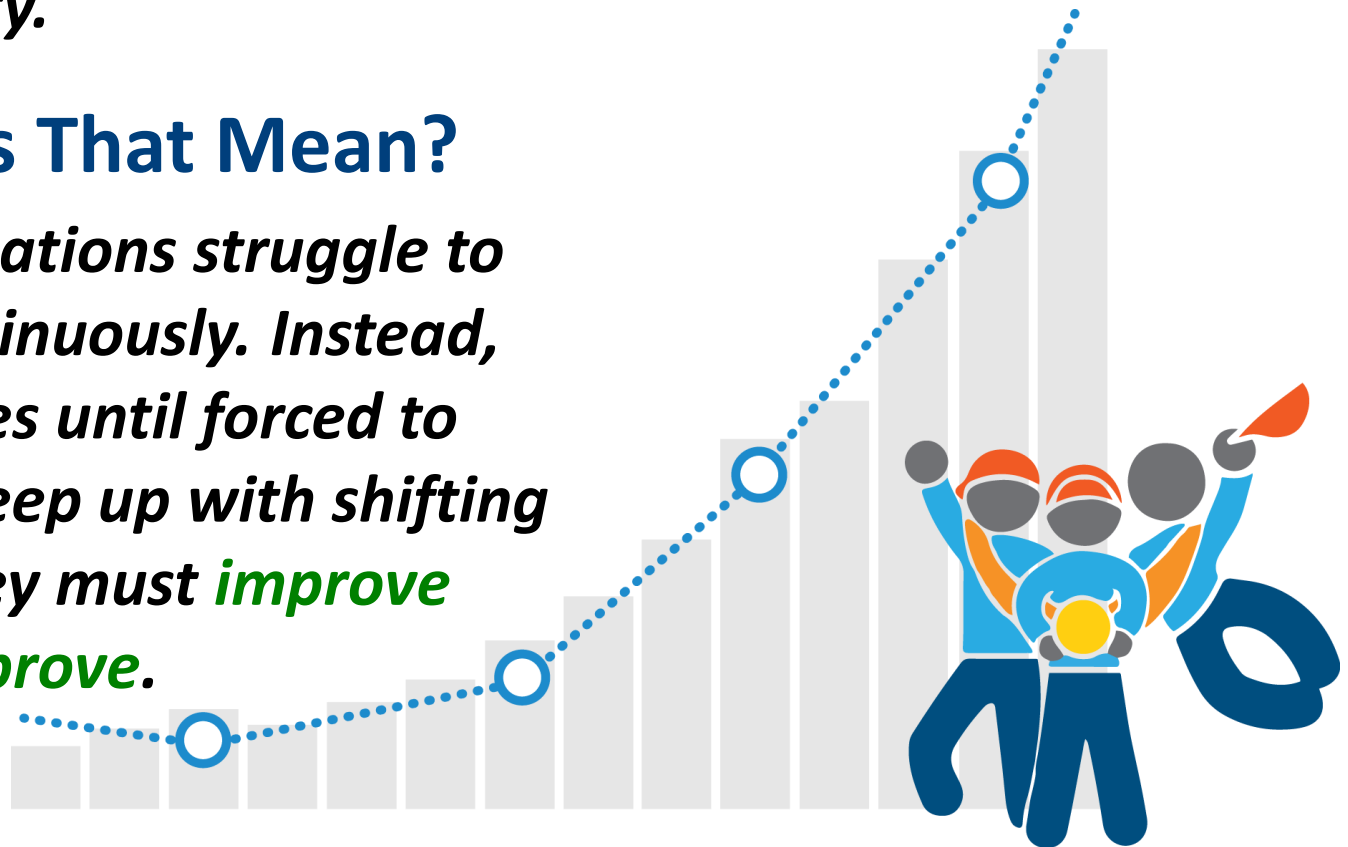
Why is Continuous Improvement so Hard?

- **Change takes too long**
- **Departments operate in silos**
- **People lack motivation to make things better**
- **Too much firefighting**
- **Not enough bandwidth**
- **Lack of trained personnel**
- **No structure for making change happen**
- **No way to capitalize on good ideas**

It doesn't have to be this way. Change can be simple, fast and effective …

But HOW?

5 Steps to Better Continuous Improvement

1. **Plan projects more effectively**

2. **Work in teams to brainstorm solutions**

3. **Turn ideas into action FAST**

4. **Track results and sustain the gains**

5. **Transform your culture**

… it's all about productive engagement!
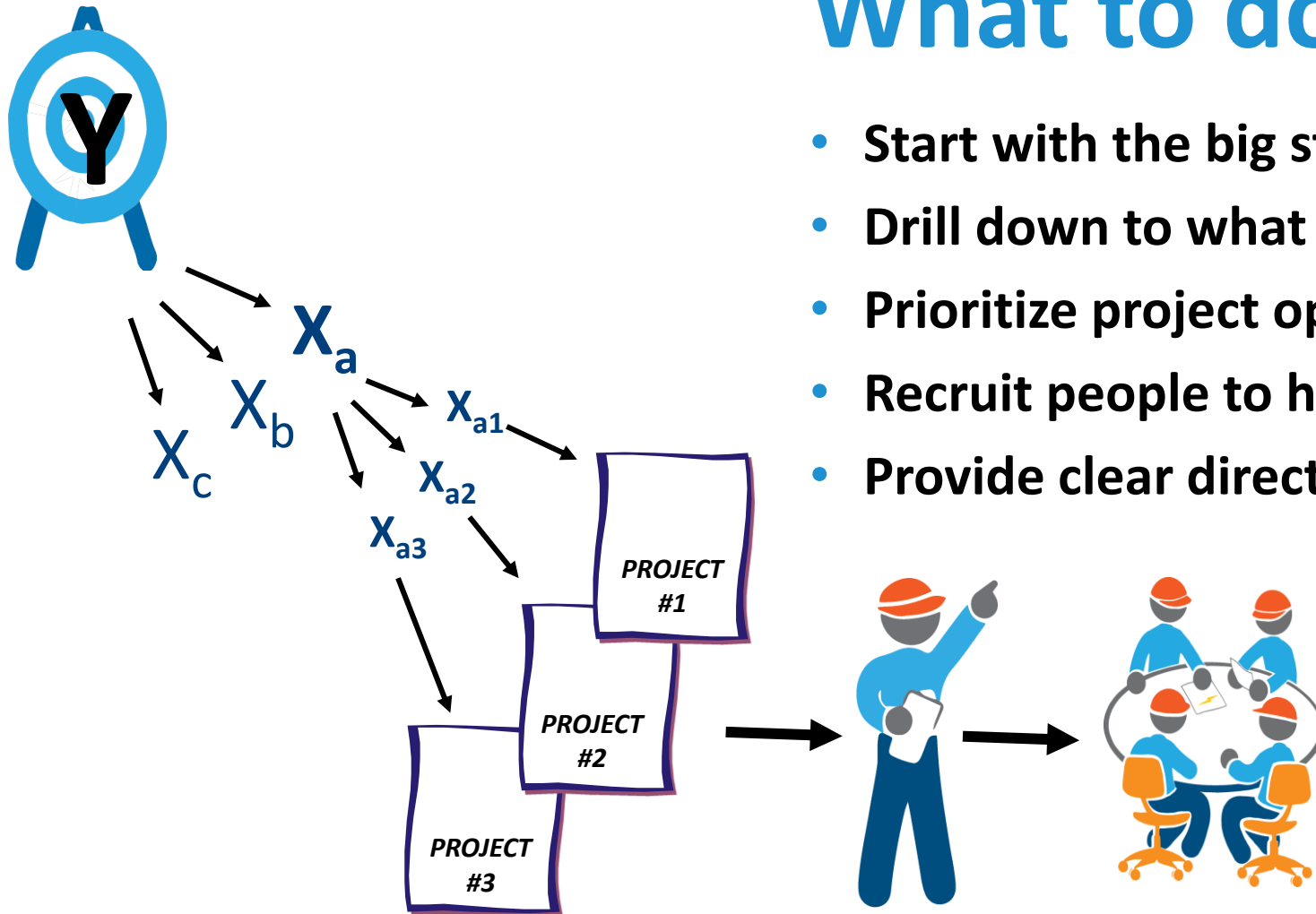
STEP 1

Plan Projects More Effectively

Well-planned projects *start sooner*, get going *faster* and get *better results* from more engaged employees.

Plan Projects More Effectively

What to do

- **Start with the big stuff**
- **Drill down to what is wrong**
- **Prioritize project opportunities**
- **Recruit people to help**
- **Provide clear direction**

X_a

X_b

X_c

X_{a1}

X_{a2}

X_{a3}

PROJECT #1

PROJECT #2

PROJECT #3

Plan Projects More Effectively

What to avoid

- **Scope creep**

- **Projects with no clear timeline**

- **Pulling in the wrong team**

- **Leaving people confused and unmotivated**

- **Not getting buy-in on "why now"**

Plan Projects More Effectively

With Good Planning

- **A clear charter**
- **A fast start**
- **Engaged employees**
- **Proper expectations**
- **Plan for communication**
- **Stakeholders up-to-speed and bought-in**

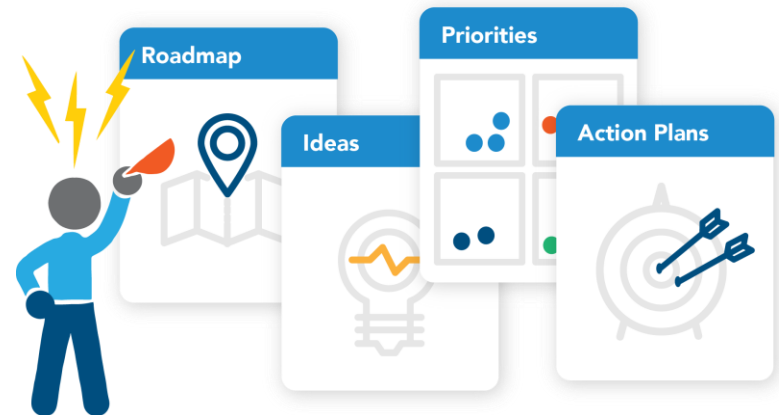**Team Guides**

Posters / Planners

Leader Guides

Plan Projects More Effectively

What Does Good Planning Look Like?

- **Clear, measurable goals**
- **Right resources identified**
- **Boundaries defined**
- **Project schedule finalized**

STEP 2

Work in Teams to Brainstorm Ideas

The best ideas come from employees closest to the work. Teams excel when free to brainstorm *what to do about a problem.*

Work in Teams to Brainstorm Ideas

What to do

- **Recruit people from areas directly affected by the problem**

- **Give them a roadmap to brainstorm solutions**

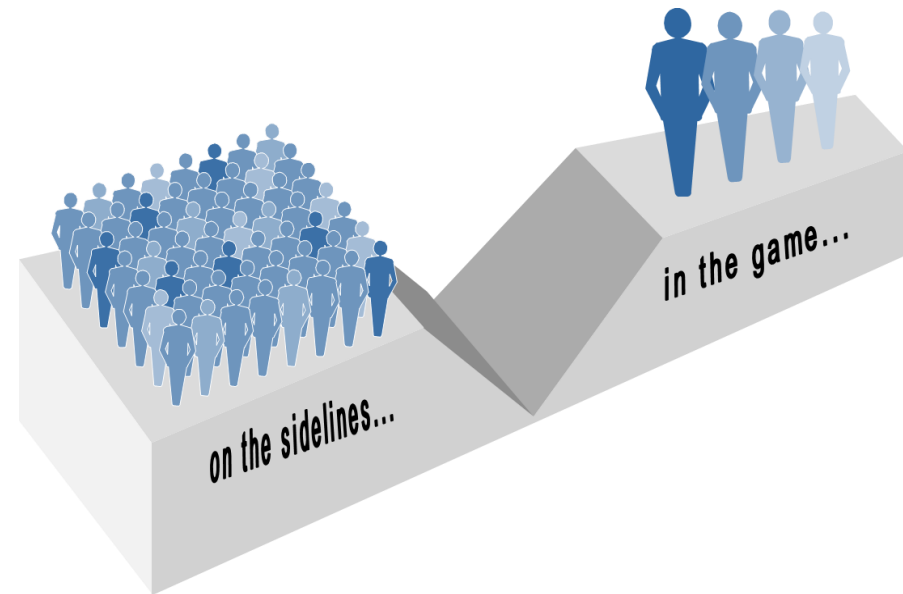- **Create an environment where the best ideas can win**

Work in Teams to Brainstorm Ideas

What to avoid

- **Judging ideas too quickly**
- **Ignoring frontline perspectives**
- **Making top-down changes**
- **NOT focusing on the big picture**
- **NOT holding people accountable**

on the sidelines...

in the game...

Work in Teams to Brainstorm Ideas

With Effective Teamwork

- **Best ideas win**

- **People buy-in because they were part of the solution**

- **Employees get excited about working on a team that gets results**

- **Solutions are collaborative**
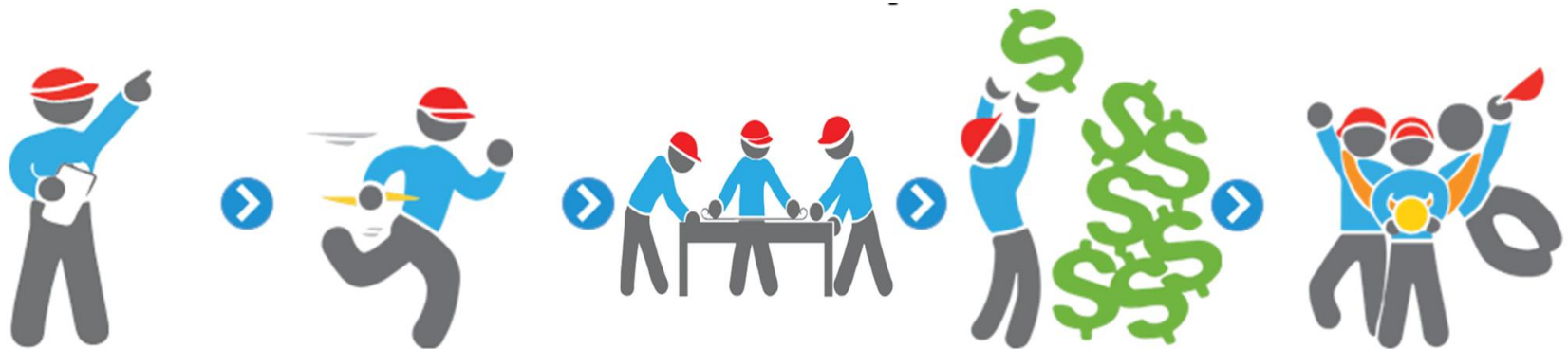
- **All stakeholders involved**

Work in Teams to Brainstorm Ideas

What does teamwork look like?

- **Shared passion, productive discussion and respect for new ideas**

- **Clear roles, realistic expectations, sharing the work and holding each other accountable**
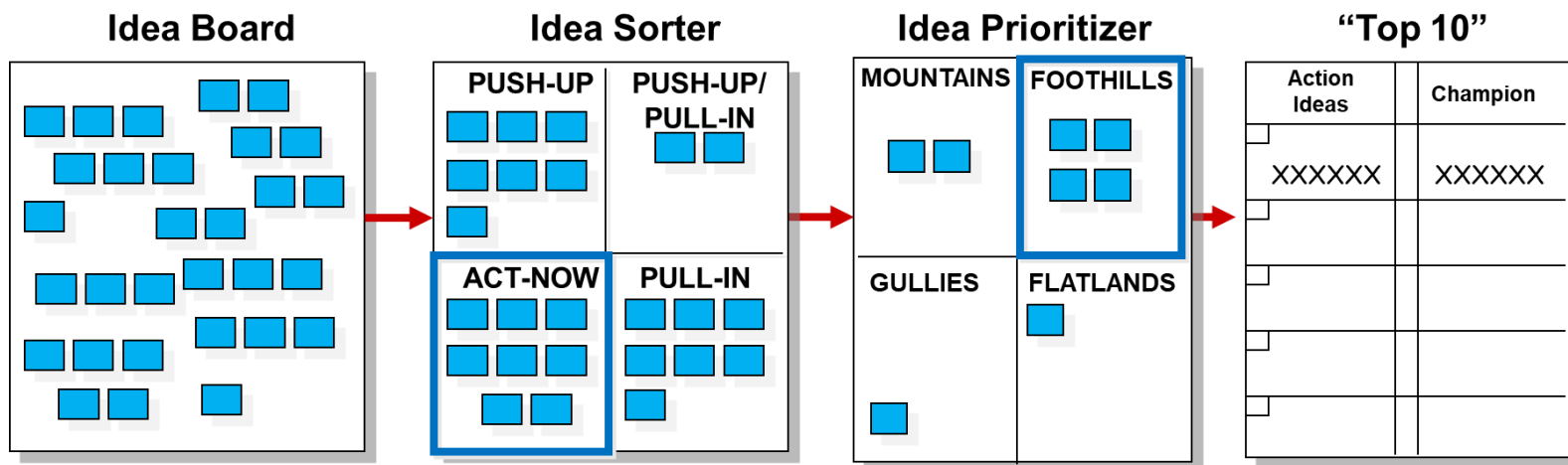
STEP 3

Turn Ideas into Action FAST

Fast action inspires momentum, confidence and excitement. Individuals excel when taking *what needs to be done* and *actually doing it.* Holding each team member accountable ensures everyone shares the load.

Turn Ideas into Action FAST

What to do

- **Filter brainstormed ideas and select the best for action based on what can ACTUALLY GET DONE**

- **Create detailed action plans assigned to individuals**

- **Hold each other, and leadership, accountable with regular communication on progress**

Turn Ideas into Action FAST

What to avoid

- **Starting with the wrong solutions to get fast action**

- **Assuming the "team" will get specific actions done. Assign them to individuals!**

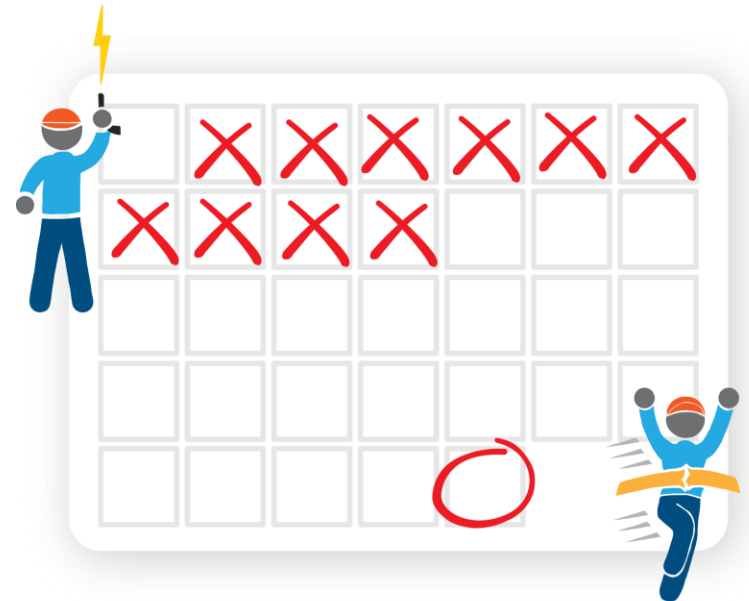- **Ignoring new ideas as the project progresses because it's "too late"**

Turn Ideas into Action FAST

When action is FAST

- **Employees get excited and stay motivated to improve**

- **Confidence builds to take on tougher challenges**

- **More work gets done**

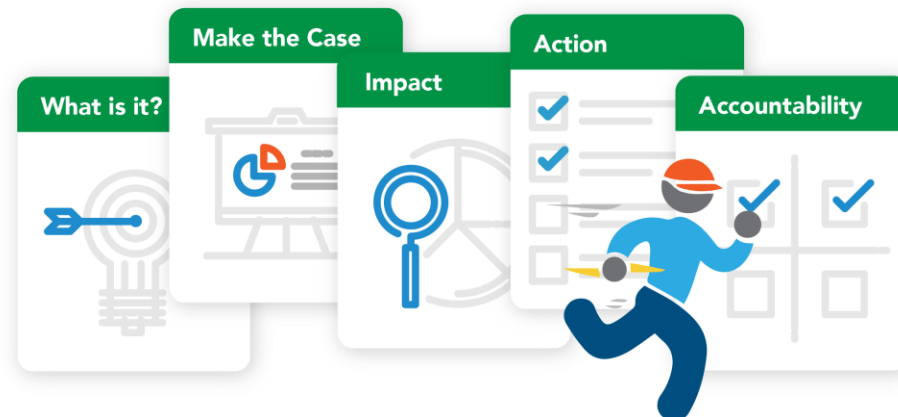- **Capability to change faster is built into your daily routine**

Turn Ideas into Action FAST

What does fast action look like?

- **Team members become Action Champions**
- **Perfect work doesn't get in the way of good work**
- **Regular check-ins maintain accountability for progress**

Track Results and Sustain the Gains

Tracking results *validates the team's efforts* and *inspires future teams* to do more. It helps build the case for future projects by showing what is possible. Good control plans ensure improvements stick.

Track Results and Sustain the Gains

What to do

- **Assess improvements by tracking each idea against the current state of performance and cost/benefit**

- **Create detailed control plans by anticipating potential roadblocks to implementation**

- **Identify red flags to backsliding and plan for them**

Track Results and Sustain the Gains

What to avoid

- **Delaying implementation – if you can, start acting on solutions right away**

- **Returning to the "old way" by ignoring key players who need to buy in**

- **Assuming actions will stick just because a team was brought together**

- **Downplaying results achieved to avoid being held to a higher standard – the higher standard is the new normal!**

Track Results and Sustain the Gains

With tracking and control ...

- **Future projects are encouraged**

- **Motivation to change increases**

- **The effort is worth it**

- **Solutions stick**

- **Front lines embrace new ideas**

- **Improvement becomes the "new normal"**

Track Results and Sustain the Gains

What does this look like?

- **Operating performance improvements tracked**

- **Financial gains assessed**

- **Control plans created that anticipate backsliding and assign individuals to preventing it**

Rapid Action Team Operating Performance Impact – page 2

Operating Performance Metric Impacted	Gains Realized/ Projected	Assumptions/ Follow-Up Actions
Error rate/accuracy Improved by: #1 Comprehensive utilities spreadsheet #3 Documented utility set up process #7Training	Baseline Performance Level: 50-60% Improved Performance Level: 5-15%	Forecasted based on full adoption and completed training - GOAL

Rapid Action Team Results Control Plans – page 1

Possible/Probable Failure Point		
Breakdown of communication between field and office.		

Prevention	Performance Checkpoint / Trigger for Action	Process Owner Responsibilities
Superintendents sticking with the training	A bill comes to the trailer	Superintendents and Project Coordinators

Implementation Plan		
WHAT Needs to be done?	**WHO will do it?**	**By WHEN?**
Meters assigned correctly	Superintendents	At project setup
Project Coordinator check-in call with Superintendents regarding utilities	Project Coordinators	Monthly
Superintendent sends of a photo of the bill to the Project Coordinator. Project Payables responsible for changing the billing address.	Superintendents/Project Coordinators/Project Payables	Bill comes to the trailer

STEP 5

Transform Your Culture

All of this is no good if the *culture doesn't change*. People want to embrace better improvement and all it takes is a few wins. Engaged employees are productive employees.

Transform Your Culture

What to do

- **When Steps 1 to 4 are done well, people get excited about change**

- **Make change easy and fun**

- **Better improvement becomes part of the culture**

- **People get excited about working in teams**
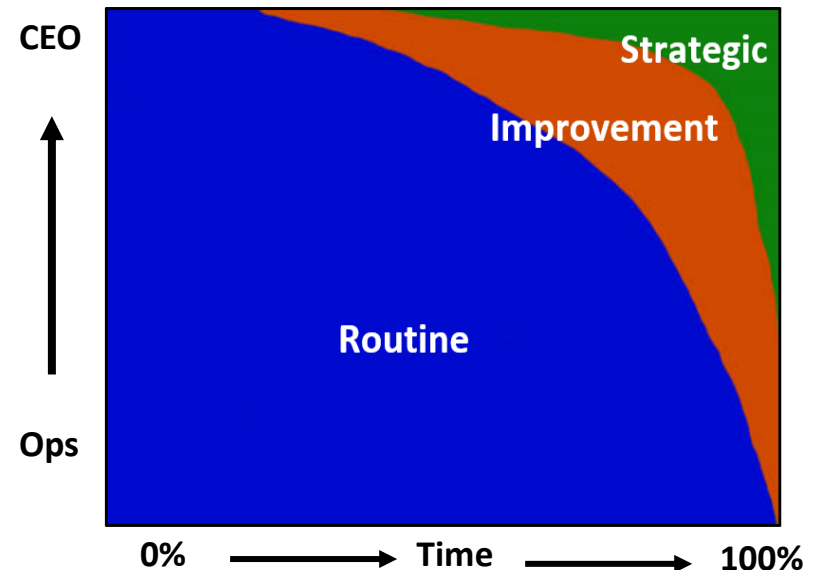
- **Fear of failure disappears**

Transform Your Culture

What to avoid

- **People are just going through the motions with no real plan**

- **Burn out by sticking to commitments made**

- **Firefighting by solving real problems**

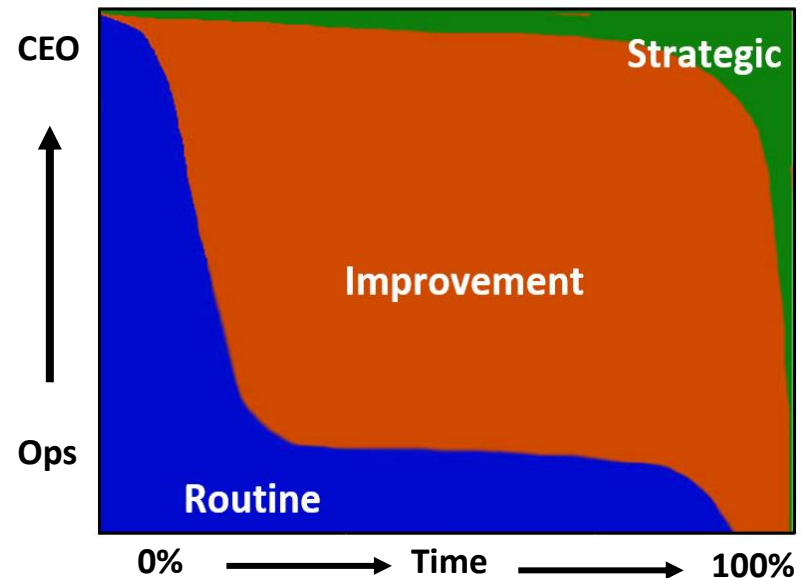- **Surface level solutions like surveys and feedback forms**

Transform Your Culture

When the culture changes …

- **Excitement**
- **Passion**
- **Creativity**
- **Innovation**
- **Engagement**
- **Productivity**

CEO

Ops

Strategic
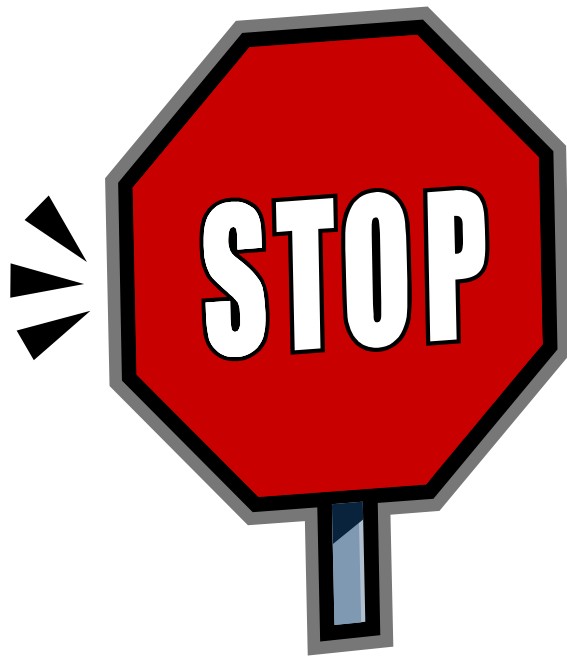
Improvement

Routine

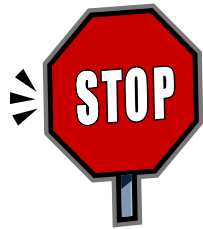0% → Time → 100%

Transform Your Culture
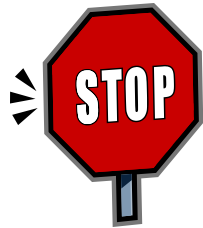
What does a transformed culture look like?

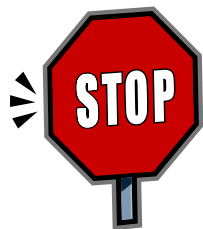So what is *stopping* you from following these 5 steps?

Common Barriers to Continuous Improvement

TOO MANY SILOS... *Difficult to foster collaboration between stakeholder groups. Implementation is a struggle.*

LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN A PROCESS... *Traditional tools are too complex. Using no process is even worse.*

LACK OF TIME... *People are too busy! Those close to the changes needed to improve don't have time to improve the business while they fight fires.*
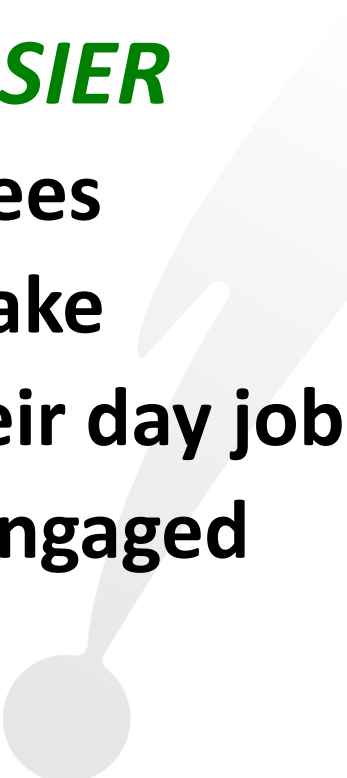
So what MUST CHANGE to overcome these barriers?

YOUR MINDSET... *How you think about improvement needs to change. It is no longer something that "just happens," but takes COMMITMENT.*

YOUR PLAN ... *Winging it and hoping for better results is not good enough. Just like any committed effort to change, you need a good plan to see success.*

The Simple Solution

Use a tool that *MAKES IT EASIER* **to get employees who don't "make change" as their day job** *productively* **engaged in continuous improvement.**

- ✓ **Just-in-time** *no classroom investment needed.*

- ✓ **Easy to understand …** *minimal jargon and foreign language.*

- ✓ **Time Sensitive …** *able to participate and still do your job.*

- ✓ *FUN AND REWARDING!*

The Simple Solution

Rapid Improvement Events – **The best process for helping organizations accomplish the** *5 Steps to Better Continuous Improvement* **by making it easier and faster to productively engage employees**

Called by many names and often referred to as …

- ✓ **Workout™ at GE**

- ✓ **Action Workout™ at Waste Management**

- ✓ **Rapid Lean Six Sigma** *(or RLSS)* **at WestRock, Valspar & NewPage**

- ✓ **Rapid Action at Veolia, Mercy Health, M&T Bank & CBRE**

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