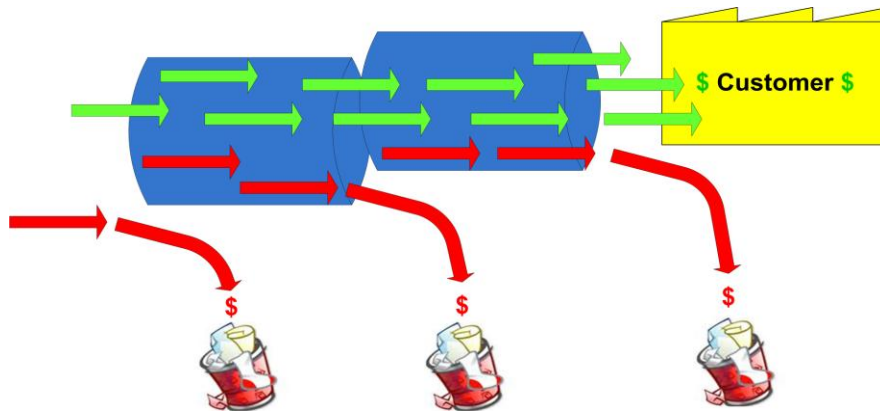


The Competitive Value of Value Stream Mapping

Plantek Productivity Consulting Inc. has been asked to perform VSM at three US plants.

Organizations survive by creating value that is appreciated enough to be purchased by their customers. Value is created through a network of interconnected processes. That value-creating-network requires constant monitoring and maintenance to ensure that precious resources are deployed effectively, efficiently and in alignment with corporate vision and strategic direction.

Much has been said about “waste elimination” in the context of Lean production. The misalignment of business processes with strategic goals is the mother of all wastes. I would argue that the existence of process misalignment is inevitable in any organization. Perhaps composing strategic plans is the most controllable task for a business leader. But how do we make sure that what’s happening on the floor actually aligns realizing such plans as intended.



Process misalignment is the mother of all wastes

How does process misalignment occur? As long as change is inevitable, no organization will be immune to process misalignment. No matter how carefully processes and process networks are designed, things will change resulting in shifts at various segments of the value stream. If the shift is a large seismic one, it would not go unnoticed and would likely receive decent attention by management. Unfortunately, most process shifts are small and hard to detect; let alone attend to. These process shifts cause leakage of value. This means that resources are partially burnt only to create production waste. Other side effects of misalignment include elongated lead time and dampened throughput capacity.

Plantek provides VSM facilitation as part of a wide range of management consulting services. Our clients are not limited to manufacturers. We have implemented VSM in some unlikely environments such as in the publishing industry with presentable results. Most recently, Plantek Productivity Consulting Inc. has been asked to perform VSM at three US plants. The three plants are members of the same group of companies and there in much to be discovered, improved, benchmarked and adopted among them. After all, VSM is considered a universal technique which facilitates transfer of best practices not only within similar organizations but also across industries.

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Depending on the scope of the value stream, we suggest keeping the length of a VSM event under a week. It is important to remember that participating staff must be released quickly so that they can go back to their value-creating activities. We strongly advise against leaving the entire task to consultants. The VSM event in and of itself is an enormous opportunity for management and staff to learn, enhance knowledge and take ownership of the process, but also commit to implementing the ensuing corrective measures. An experienced consultant should assume the role of facilitator to walk cross-functional teams through a VSM event.

A full VSM cycle results in the definition of small-to-medium size projects geared to eliminating or reducing misalignments among the processes participating in the value stream under examination. The VSM event is like taking an MRI image in order to make it possible to visualize disorders in a patient. Following such diagnosis, treatments strategies should be tailored and implemented in order to remedy disorders but also prevent more serious ailments.

Value Stream Mapping is gaining increasing acceptance among various industries as the pressure of local and global competition continues to mount. In a nutshell VSM (a) uncovers leakage of value through wasted of resources, (b) plans for repairing and optimizing the value stream, (c) plugs the leaky areas through dedicated projects, and (d) protects and expands market share resulting from an improved state of competitiveness.

About the author:



Brian Amouzegar is the founder and president of Plantek Productivity Consulting Inc. Plantek provides world-class consulting and training in the areas of operational efficiency, quality engineering and project management. Detailed scope of services, projects and other information are available through www.plantek.ca.

Brian is a senior member of the American Society of Quality where he maintains a CQE and SSBB certification in good standing. He is also a certified PMP by the Project Management Institute. Brian holds a bachelor degree in industrial accounting, a master's degree in industrial engineering and is currently perusing his PhD in engineering management.

Besides consulting, Brian teaches graduate and undergraduate courses at BCIT, NYIT and University Canada West.

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