Standard Operating Procedure

VSM Symbols

Background:

Value Stream Mapping is a key Continuous Improvement tool which allows the user to "see the waste" in a process, thereby putting together an action plan to remove the waste and streamline the process in question. This tool, while requiring some degree of understanding through training, can be a relatively simple process, if conducted appropriately.

Value Stream Mapping

There are two primary methodologies utilized when conducting value stream mapping exercises:

- The Learning to See Method (named from the book of the same name which introduced the concept of value stream mapping to the world)

- The Post-It-Note Method (a later version, that visualizes and simplifies the mapping process)

Although the Post-It-Note method has gained in popularity in recent years, primarily due to it's simplicity and ease of understanding with project team members, there are still many applications where the Learning to See method is used or is more applicable to the improvement efforts. Particularly in the documentation component of the process.

Standard Operating Procedure:

The VSM symbol sheet attached is a visual indication of several of the main value stream mapping symbols that are used when conducting value stream mapping exercises using the Learning to See Method. One of the strengths of this method is a standard convention for documentation of the process being analyzed, therefore it is critical to understand the symbols that make up this standard convention.

This value stream mapping symbol sheet is simply a reference tool, so a step-by-step operating procedure is not required. Simply choose the symbol from the list that is required to represent what ever part of the process is being documented.

Outcomes:

Adhering to the proper standardized conventions for value stream mapping allows for ease of communication amongst others conducting and utilizing the output from value stream mapping sessions conducted and documented with the Learning to See method. It allows participants and users to gain maximum information with minimum effort and increases the likelihood that actionable items will be understood and pursued, which is the real goal of value stream mapping.