Standard Operating Procedure

A3- Continuous Improvement Project Reporting Tool

Background:

Today's business world is fast-paced, with a multitude of information coming at people constantly throughout the business day. Effective problem solving and project control are critical to ensuring your limited time and resources are being used appropriately.

Effective problem solving can best be achieved through utilizing a proven approach that validates that your improvements are being realized and are sustained for the long term.

Without an effective problem solving approach, continuous improvement project leaders risk implementing solutions that do not address the root cause of the identified problem. When this occurs, there is a high risk that the problem will reoccur in the future.

A3 Continuous Improvement Project reporting Tool:

The A3 Continuous Improvement Project Reporting Tool is an excellent tool to help guide the problem-solving efforts and ensure project control throughout the life of a project. It provides a simple and standardized approach for systematically guiding problem-solving activities through a structured approach. The A3 utilized the Edward Deming Plan-Do-Check-Act methodology to help guide the improvement efforts and to control the flow of the project. The A3 is also an excellent tool for providing overall project status to project stakeholders.

The A3 provides a step by step guide for problem solving and provides evidence that the improvement efforts are attaining the planned improvement results. The A3 is an effective tool for sharing project status and providing interim results.

Standard Operating Procedure:

1. An A3 should be maintained for all projects.
2. The A3 should be maintained by the project lead.
3. Steps for maintaining the A3
   a. DEFINE the Problem through a Problem Statement - when a goal or objective is not being met, you have a problem. The Problem Statement is a description of what goal is not being met (e.g. reduce defects in assemble resulting from …, improve shipping performance by …,

b. DEFINE the current performance to understanding the Current State- what are the current state processes and current state performance. Document the current state process utilizing value stream mapping and/or process mapping. Document the current state results in a graphical format.

c. MEASURE – what are the baseline metrics and the targeted improvement goals.

d. ANALYZE -   Conduct root cause analyses to determine potential reasons of the problem (fishbone, 5 whys, etc.)

e. ANALYZE – Develop countermeasures - Countermeasures are the changes to be made to the process that will address the identified root cause(s).

f. ANALYZE – Develop a future state – how is the process expected to work in the future. What are the specific improvements/changes to the current state process and the planned results

g. IMPROVE – Improvement Plan - The improvement plan should include the list of actions that need to be completed to implement the countermeasures. The improvement plan should include a list of specific tasks to be completed to realize the target condition, the individual responsible for each task, and the due date. (Who's doing what by when). Utilize the Action Plan Register for this activity.

h. IMPROVE – Stakeholder plan – A plan to incorporate stakeholder input and feedback into the improvement plan should be developed. Develop a communications plan to support the implementation.

i. IMPROVE – Implementation – Implement the improvement plans.

j. CONTROL – Evaluate the results against the planned outcomes. What other opportunities exist. Are there any unresolved issues. After evaluating the results make appropriate adjustments, if necessary. If expected results not achieved, redefine the problem and repeat steps. If expected results achieved, implement ongoing monitoring for sustainability.

4. Completed A3s should be retained as per company document retention policies. It is recommended that completed A3s be retained for at least 1 year to allow for integration with internal performance management practices

Outcomes:

The A3 can assist in the monitoring and managing the continuous improvement projects. A3s can prevent symptoms of problems from being addressed rather than root cause(s) of a problem.

This tool can increase project effectiveness and accountability among team members, resulting in stronger teams and higher performance levels.