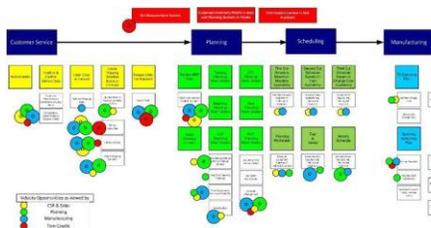




Value Stream Maps and Process Maps are both great tools- but which to use? In this edition we offer tips for selecting the right tool for the job.

Here's to ideas you can use to make an impact in your organization,

David Rucker
Rucker & Associates



Selecting the Right Tools

To see where the most effective improvements can be made to your company's operations, it is best to start by making the process visual through a flow chart. "Making the process visual is usually the right first step," said David Rucker, Founder and President of Rucker and Associates, Inc., a Lean and Six Sigma consultancy. "Seeing it all laid out creates a shared understanding among all the people on the team and then everyone is on the same page."

From here, you can begin to see what is working well and where opportunities for improvements can be made. "No one person knows that whole process even if they have worked at the company for 20 years," added Rucker. "They all live in just one slice of the whole process."

When making the process visual, make sure to choose the right tool between a Value Stream Map or a Process Map. A Value Stream Map (VSM) is the best tool to expose any opportunities for improving material flow, inventory bottlenecks and process details. Work Flow Maps are best utilized on the business end for transactional processes, ordering, payroll and almost anything off the shop floor.

"What makes a good Process Map is to organize the flow into 'swim lanes' or color coded by department such as scheduling, planning, customer service and sales," suggested Rucker. "Make sure the flow chart includes all activities to complete the process with decisions and re-work identified."



If you're on the shop floor and studying manufacturing processes and inventory flow, your best bet is to use VSM. The map should include key data for each process, such as cycle time, lead time, defect rate, and inventory. "That way you will get a big picture view of the manufacturing flow from getting materials from your suppliers to shipping out to your customers," Rucker said.

Each tool is relatively simple to build and should include a timeline. "That way you can see exactly how many days it takes to get through the entire process and where the constraints are," added Rucker.

For more details or for help in deciding which tool...

...is best for your company, give Rucker and Associates a call. We will help your company work leaner, faster and stronger. Our goal is to create an independent, self-sustaining Lean Six Sigma program for our customers. Through ongoing mentoring and follow-up, we stay connected - sharing ownership of both the new processes and the intended results.

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