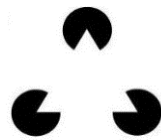


Continuous Improvement: the Deming Wheel

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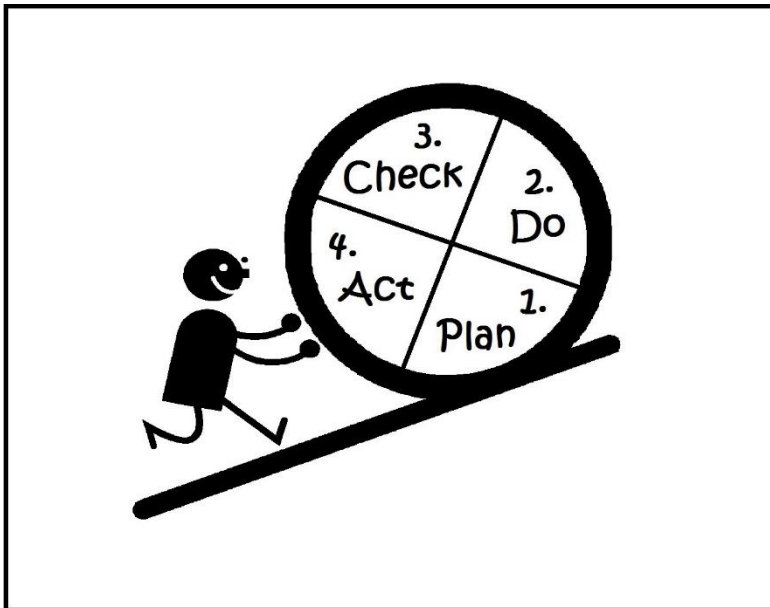


Access

To a certain extent, improving the performance of a company can be achieved through the improvement of its underlying structure, processes and organization. As part of the famous Kaizen practices, a common management method used to initiate and sustain a virtuous circle of continuous improvement is the Deming wheel, also known as the Shewhart cycle and more frequently referred to as the PDCA cycle. This method simply consists in running iteratively four steps on the system to improve: Plan (define objectives, success criteria, contingencies), Do (execution), Check (analyse result against initial objectives and success criteria), Act (adjust).

Explore

To start pushing the Deming wheel, a preliminary “Observation” phase is necessary. Purpose is to identify the system to improve in priority for a better performance and to recognize the possible interdependencies with other systems. In case of a large, complex system, break it down in smaller subsystems easier to act on.



① Plan

- Define precise goals, desired outcomes and related measures of success
- Precise progress evaluation metrics, completion milestones, resources, stakeholders
- “Go slow to go fast”: spend quality time to identify all risks and dependencies upfront

② Do

- Execute on your plans insisting on single ownership and accountability for each action item
- Identify road blockers and define alternative solutions or mitigation steps
- Communicate and report progress to all stakeholders, seek for feedback

③ Check

- Compare the result of the “Do” phase to the expected outcomes and measures of success as set in the “Plan” phase; identify gaps and deviation
- Run the lessons learned of success and failures and identify root causes for existing gaps

④ Act

- Use the results of the analysis from the “Check” phase to define corrective actions
- Share results with all stakeholders to close the cycle before starting a new iteration

Continuous improvement requires to run the above cycle iteratively. The results of the “Act” phase are obviously a clear basis for the next cycle iteration, adding to it new needs potentially created by a changing context. Solidify (formalize) as much as possible what has been put in place before starting the new iteration of the cycle.

Develop

<http://leadersyndrome.wordpress.com/2013/04/30/continuous-improvement-keep-pushing-the-deming-wheel-on-the-kaizen-road/>