

Increase Improvement **Capacity** with Efficient Training



*In a series of articles, we discuss key challenges and solutions to making business improvement more effective, efficient, and sustainable. The fifth article is about **Training Efficiency**.*

Two Main Processes

In earlier articles, we described how to overcome some of the challenges to *effective* business improvement, e.g. apply Systems Thinking [1]; establish True North KPIs [2]; build Improvement Capability [3]; and use an adaptable and integrated improvement model [4]. In this article, however, the focus is on business improvement *efficiency*.

Using the adaptable and integrated improvement Model (AIIM) as a reference, it is evident that there are two main processes to manage in business improvement (Figure 1). A primary horizontal process flow that transforms *Opportunities* into *Improvements*, and a secondary vertical process flow that transfers *Knowledge* to *People*.

The former is the primary flow since it directly creates business value and economic benefits, but to succeed, it depends on the availability of competent and motivated people, which is what the secondary process flow delivers.

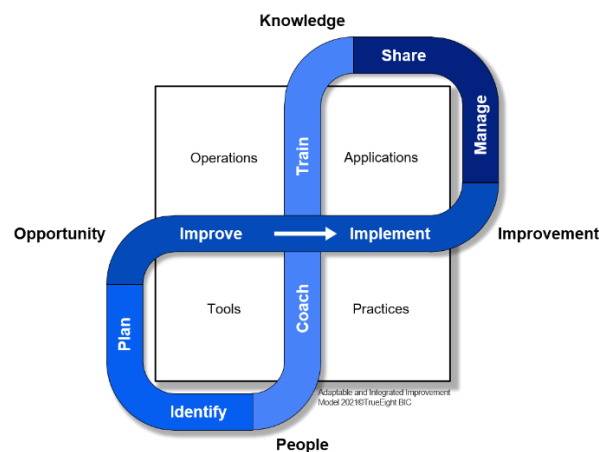


Figure 1. The adaptable and integrated improvement model (AIIM).

Inefficient Transfer of Knowledge

Although there are inefficiencies in the daily improvement work, such as waiting for information, collecting too much data, or running a workshop that could have been smoother and faster, the most severe inefficiencies are to be found in the process of transferring knowledge to people.

This learning inefficiency prevents crucial knowledge from areas like Business Process Management, Lean, Six Sigma, Project Management, Agile, Data Analysis, and Change Management from being available, learned, and applied by the improvement teams in a cost and time-efficient way.

An inefficient and poorly managed training and learning process will clearly have negative consequences on the performance of the business improvement work. Three of the most serious consequences are:

1. Unaligned Knowledge. If the training and learning process is not managed well and coordinated, people will learn different improvement methods and approaches, have different views on the improvement work, and have different levels of competence and experience. This situation will make it more challenging for improvement teams to work efficiently together (Figure 2a).

It might even lead to time- and energy-consuming discussions and even conflicts in the improvement teams (Figure 2b). In contrast, aligned and synchronized knowledge on improvement methods helps groups to establish shared objectives, agree on roles and how to best work together, and faster become an effective team [6] (Figure 2c).

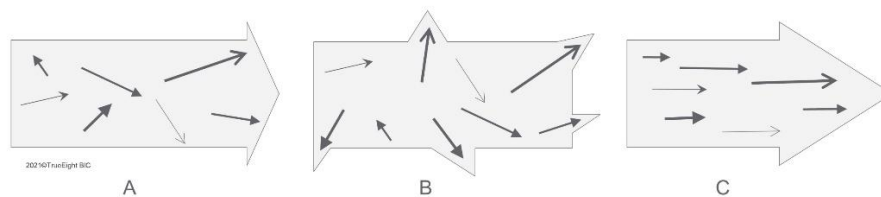


Figure 2. Aligned knowledge enables teamwork.

2. Not Applying. Another consequence of inefficient training and learning is that resources are spent on learning methods, tools, and practices that are never used in reality. Many training courses in business improvement provides a standard material focusing on *one* method e.g., Scrum, Lean, or Six Sigma.

These type of training push a large amount of in-depth knowledge to the participant to cover all aspects of *one* method. Unfortunately, much of what is taught might not be applicable in the type of improvement initiative and situation that the participant is facing. Therefore the actual value of these type of training can be quite limited, except in passing an exam or achieving a certification in the method (Figure 3).

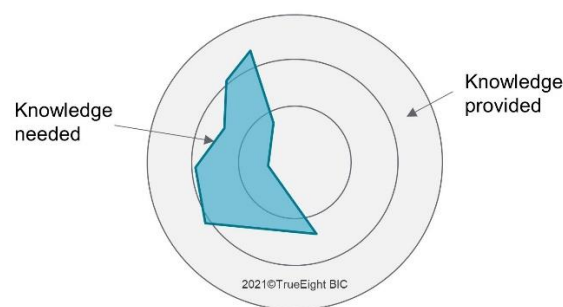


Figure 3. Inefficient training provided knowledge that is not used.

3. Early Dropouts. A costly consequence of inefficient training and learning, is that too many candidates are dropping out and quitting their learning path before achieving sufficient competence and experience in leading business improvement (Figure 4).

The theory taught in the classroom must be applied in reality repeatedly to achieve deeper learning [7] [8] and benefit from the learning curve effect [9]. Unfortunately, many candidates give up too early, never applying what they learned and then forgetting most of it making the training effort a poor investment.

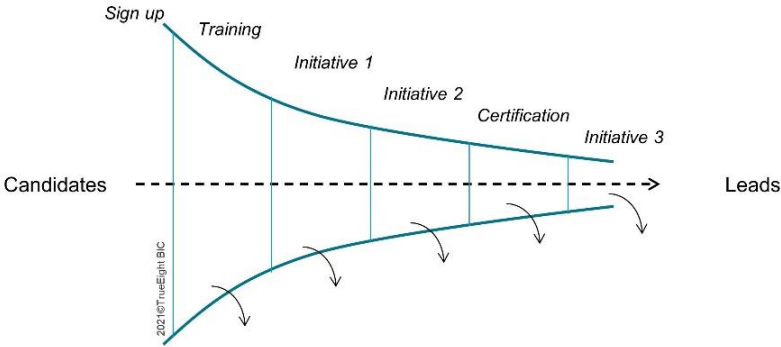


Figure 4. Too many drops out of the learning process before reaching needed competence level.

Application-Based Training

Application-based training starts with the improvement opportunity, not the method. It prepares the participants to lead the most common types of improvement initiatives. Validated improvement *Applications* guide the participants on how to practically apply the most suitable methods, tools, and practices from *Knowledge Areas* like Lean, Agile, and Six Sigma (Figure 5).

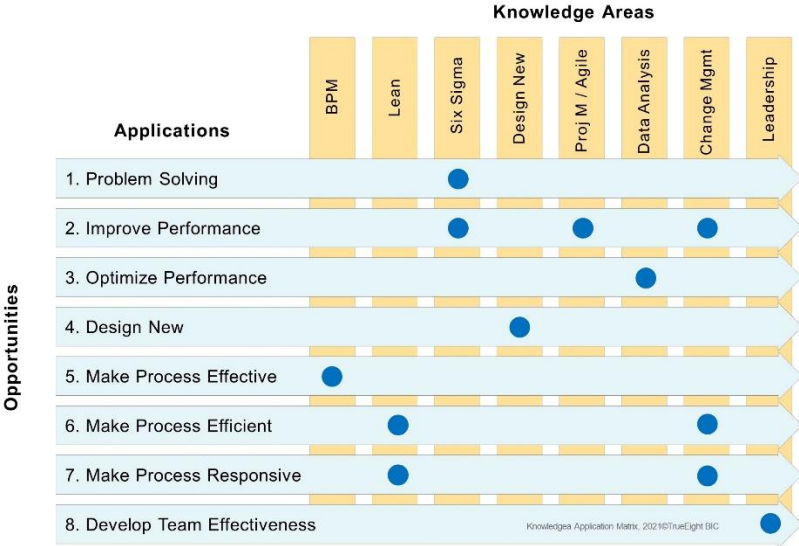


Figure 5. Need-driven training with proven applications.

Application-based training resolves the issue with **Not Applying** since the training courses are designed to practically address the most common improvement opportunities that an organization has.

It is a demand-driven training where the organization’s improvement need pulls out the best methods, tools, and practices from *several* knowledge areas, which is a more efficient than to push a standard training material that covers only one method.

Modular Training Program

To resolve the issue with too many and too **Early Dropouts**, a modular training program was created that develop competence for the four principle roles in business improvement - Champion, Sponsor, Lead, and Coach. The training program motivates learning by offering courses that fits the participant’s role and needs. The program combines theoretical training modules with practical application that also encourages reaching higher competence levels (Figure 6).

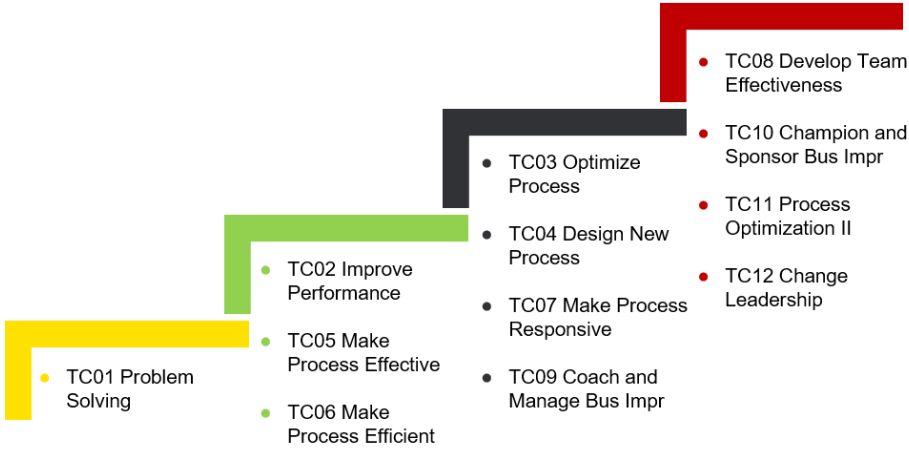


Figure 6. Modular training program for the Lead, Coach, Sponsor, and Champion role.

Application-based training, a modular training program, and the AIIM model all help to resolve the problem with **Unaligned Knowledge**. The knowledge areas in AIIM are structured and aligned to ensure that all training material fits together, uses the same terms and definitions, and has a minimum of redundancies and non-value-adding content. In addition, the same five-step improvement model is used in all training courses, which further aligns the improvement teams and facilitates teamwork.

With a more efficient training and learning process as described, more people in the organization can receive training for the same cost. Thereby can more improvement work be done and the volume of improvements increase, which benefits organizations that need to increase their improvement pace.

References

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