

How BPC learned to get the synergy of multiple process improvement methods:

Sterling Mortensen the founder of Business Productivity Consulting worked at Hewlett Packard for 31 years. He did electrical engineering, production engineering, software development and management for product development in 10 different small and large divisions. In his second year at Hewlett Packard he found a strong desire to make things work faster, easier and better. He started taking training classes inside and outside the company. He bought hundreds of books, audio programs and videos on these subjects and would study and then apply them at work. Early in his career he was promoted to be an architect for software development for controllers, to lead and train teams in multiple divisions in better software development. He was soon promoted to be a manager and soon after that assigned as the software productivity manager for his division in Colorado as a recognition that he was improving things on his projects and they wanted those improvements to spread to other projects in the division.

Sterling began to learn that some of the methods and approaches would work as advertised and others didn't. Some methods would work on one project and not on another. Using his curiosity for how things work, he kept investigating, talking to experts, reading and experimenting to find out when the tools work and why, when they don't and why, when to use each tool and when not to.

Studying many different authors, teachers and methods started to reveal even faster why certain approaches only worked in some situations. The underlying principles of process change and improvement began to get clearer by comparing and contrasting the different approaches and seeing the results in real projects. He had training in Theory of Constraints, queuing methods, Lean and then became a Six Sigma black belt. He was trained by some of the statisticians and others who worked for Deming on improvement projects around the world. It became clear that combining parts of different methods made larger improvements, with less time to make the change.

It was also found that you needed to develop new intuitions because systems don't work the way most people expect. Schools do very little teaching about processes made up of interrelated activities separated by queues and with variation in times to perform the tasks actually work. You have to start entering the world of statistics, queuing theory, and people behavior studies to start seeing why systems work differently than expected. This learning can give someone new eyes and ears to find out where the key system problem is and what can be done to resolve it.

Sterling found that preparing to speak at conferences or training classes helped the ideas of what worked and why they worked to become clearer to himself. Steven Covey says that you should teach what you want to learn and keep and he found this to be very true. When you work to explain it to someone else, you get new insights about why things worked the way they did. It accelerates the learning started by study and hands on experience. He has spoken at over 5 conferences on Theory of Constraints, Design for Six Sigma and Lean.

Do the methods BPC uses work? Yes, they work very well. Why? Because of learning from hundreds of others and finding how to make a synergy of the different methods that work even better when blended together. Because of the experiences in past improvement projects the methods can be applied even faster in new improvement projects.

Call or email now to discuss your needs and find out if working together your goals can be accomplished faster and with less cost.

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