

Standardized Storytelling

A3 Reporting

The A3 Method

The Toyota tool known as A3 refers to the international paper size that is roughly the size of a 11x17-inch (tabloid) paper used in the United States. The A3 format is used by Toyota as the template for different types of reports such as:

- Problem Solving Report
- Strategy Report
- Status Report
- Proposal Report

An A3 Report Can:

- clearly tell a story, especially when you wish to simplify or clarify a complicated issue
- be used as a jumping off point for Kaizen or other continuous improvement activities
- provide a clear and concise method of reporting information
- be used to teach problem-solving
- create efficient working environments

Most importantly, the A3 achieves operational learning!

The A3 Method

A3's are deceptively simple consisting of a sequence of seven boxes that are utilized in the following method:

1. Background - establish the business context and importance of a specific problem
2. Current Condition - describe the current conditions of the problem
3. Goals/Targets - identify the desired outcome
4. Analysis - analyze the situation to establish causality
5. Propose Countermeasures – describe how to improve the problem
6. Plan - prescribe the actions for getting it done
7. Follow-up - map out the follow-up process

A3 Template

Project Title _____ Project Leader _____ Business Area _____

<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="background-color: #cccccc;">Background</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 100px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <th style="background-color: #cccccc;">Current Condition</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 100px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <th style="background-color: #cccccc;">Goals/Targets</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 30px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 30px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 30px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <th style="background-color: #cccccc;">Analysis</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 100px;"></td> </tr> </table>	Background		Current Condition		Goals/Targets				Analysis		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="5" style="background-color: #cccccc;">Propose Counter Measures</th> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="height: 100px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="5" style="background-color: #cccccc;">Implementation Plan</th> </tr> <tr> <th style="font-size: small;">Deliverables</th> <th style="font-size: small;">Timeline</th> <th style="font-size: small;">Responsible</th> <th style="font-size: small;">Support</th> <th style="font-size: small;">Review</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 30px;"></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 30px;"></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 30px;"></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 30px;"></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 30px;"></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="5" style="background-color: #cccccc;">Follow-up</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td colspan="4"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 30px;"></td> <td colspan="4"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 30px;"></td> <td colspan="4"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 30px;"></td> <td colspan="4"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 30px;"></td> <td colspan="4"></td> </tr> </table>	Propose Counter Measures										Implementation Plan					Deliverables	Timeline	Responsible	Support	Review																										Follow-up																													
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A3 Document Translation Example

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Acme plant to double capacity. Much document translation required

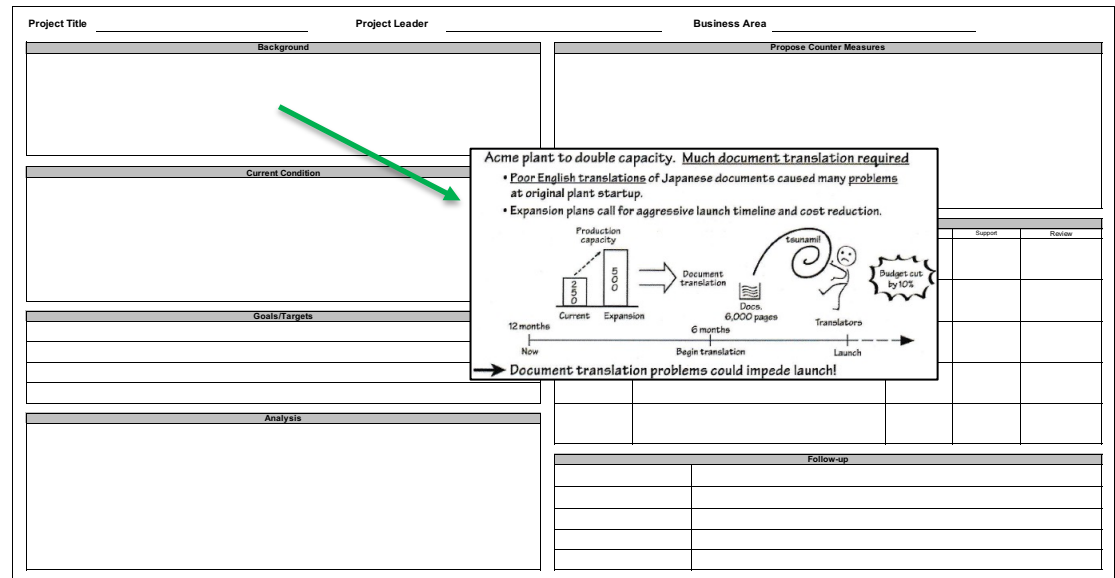
- Poor English translations of Japanese documents caused many problems at original plant startup.
- Expansion plans call for aggressive launch timeline and cost reduction.

→ Document translation problems could impede launch!

A3 Document Translation Example

A3s tell a story, a story that includes a standard layout, a beginning, a middle, and an end. This method is used to communicate both facts and meaning in a commonly understood format.

There is no one fixed, absolute, correct template. Regardless of setting, it is always the underlying thinking that matters.



A3 Document Translation Example

Project Title _____ Project Leader _____ Business Area _____

Background

Acme plant to double capacity. Much document translation required

- Poor English translations of Japanese documents caused many problems at original plant startup.
- Expansion plans call for aggressive launch timeline and cost reduction.

→ Document translation problems could impede launch!

Current Condition

Goals/Targets

Analysis

Propose Counter Measures

Documents by department

Documents by type

Current-state map

Problems:
 Cost = 10% over budget.
 Delivery = Over 50% late; long, variable lead times
 Quality = Much rework > 50%; many errors reach customer
 Overall = 😞

Lead time = 5 to 60 days

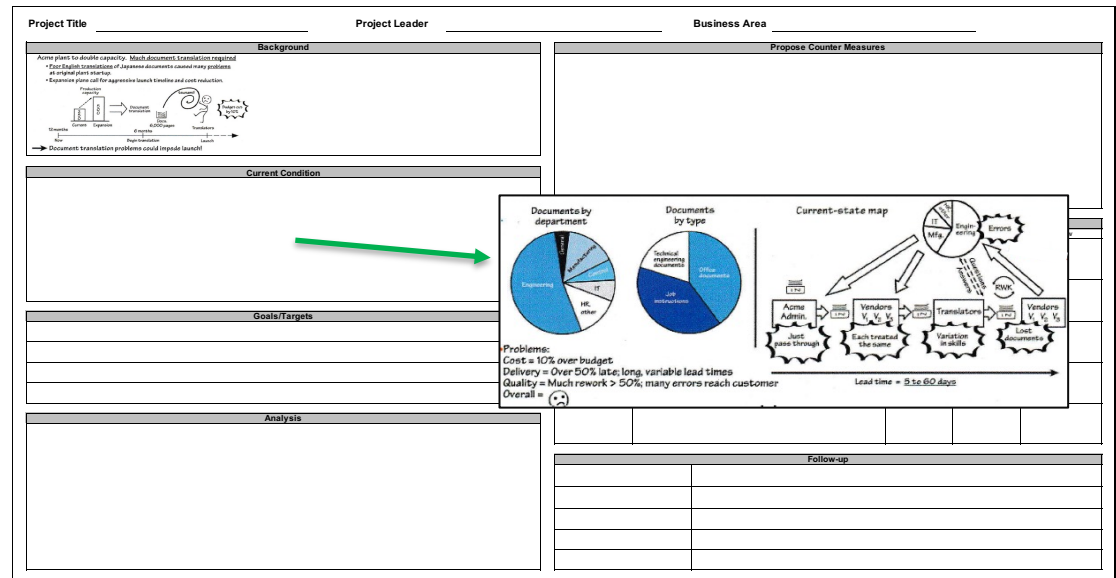
Follow-up

A3 Document Translation Example

Current conditions are always derived from the gemba. Real facts about the real work are derived from careful investigation by the owner.

Defining the problem simply represents the most important part of any A3.

A3s employ visual methods to share the information and thinking. This helps condense the key facts into meaningful visual shorthand.



A3 Document Translation Example

Project Title _____ Project Leader _____ Business Area _____

Background

Acme plant to double capacity. Much document translation required
 • Poor English translations of Japanese documents caused many problems at original plant start-up.
 • Expansion plans call for aggressive launch timeline and cost reduction.

→ Document translation problems could impede launch!

Current Condition

• Problems:
 Cost = 10% over budget
 Delivery = Over 50% late; long, variable lead times
 Quality = Much rework > 50%; many errors reach customer
 Overall = 😞

Propose Counter Measures

Quality - 0 defects at launch
 - Rework less than 10%

Delivery - 100% on-time
 - Level weekly volume
 - Consistent short lead time with predictable delivery

Cost - 10% decrease - rework down: overtime
 down

Follow-up

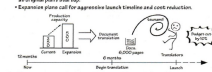
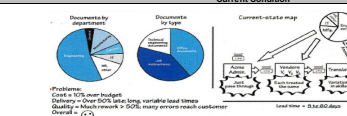
Goals/Targets

Analysis

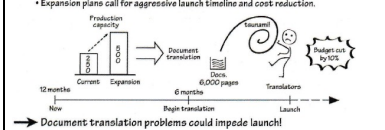
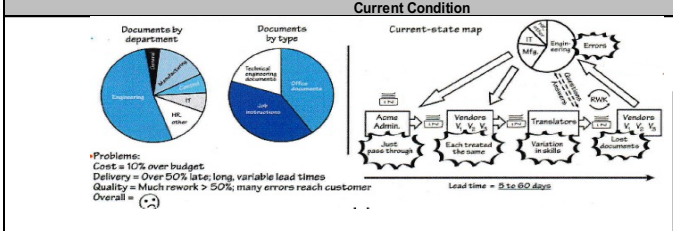
A3 Document Translation Example

Once you have the problem stated, the development of goals reflect the performance of the change from the current state to the future state.

How do we know when we are done? We've either met our targets or we've gotten as close as we can without a large capital expenditure (for example).

Project Title	Project Leader	Business Area																				
Background A new plant to double capacity. Much document translation required. • The multiple translation of Japanese documents caused many problems at original plant start-up. • Expansion plan call for aggressive launch timeline and cost reduction.  → Document translation problems could impact launch!		Propose Counter Measures																				
Current Condition  *Problems: Quality = 40% over budget Quality = 100% late long variable lead times Quality = 100% rework > 50% many errors reach customer Overall = C/D Lead time = 3 to 80 days		<table border="1"> <tr> <td><u>Quality</u></td> <td>- 0 defects at launch</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Delivery</u></td> <td>- Rework less than 10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>- 100% on-time</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>- Level weekly volume</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>- Consistent short lead time with</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Cost</u></td> <td>10% decrease rework down overtime</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Quality</u>	- 0 defects at launch	<u>Delivery</u>	- Rework less than 10%		- 100% on-time		- Level weekly volume		- Consistent short lead time with	<u>Cost</u>	10% decrease rework down overtime								
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A3 Document Translation Example

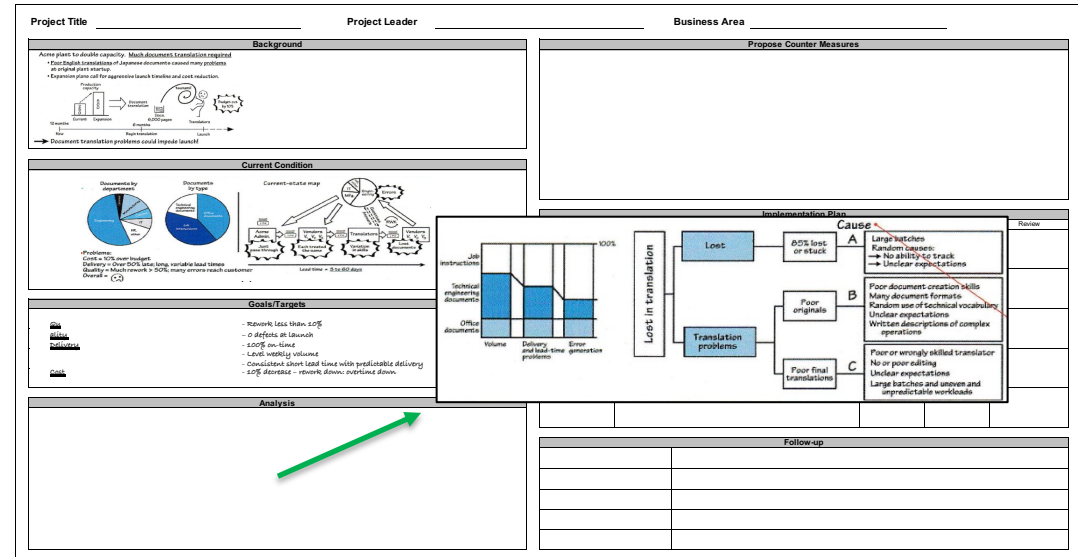
Project Title _____	Project Leader _____	Business Area _____																												
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<p>Acme plant to double capacity. Much document translation required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor English translations of Japanese documents caused many problems at original plant startup. Expansion plans call for aggressive launch timeline and cost reduction. 		 <p>Current Condition</p> <p>Documents by department: Engineering, Production, Sales, Marketing, R&D, HR, Other.</p> <p>Documents by type: Technical engineering documents, Office documents, Job instructions.</p> <p>Problems: Cost = 10% over budget Delivery = Over 50% late; long, variable lead times Quality = Much rework > 50%; many errors reach customer Overall = ☹️</p>																												
Goals/Targets																														
Analysis		<p>Lost in translation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lost: 85% lost or stuck Translation problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor originals Poor final translations <p>Cause</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Large batches Random causes → No ability to track → Unclear expectations B Poor document creation skills Many document formats Random use of technical vocabulary Unclear expectations Written descriptions of complex operations C Poor or wrongly skilled translator No or poor editing Unclear expectations Large batches and uneven and unpredictable workloads 																												
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A3 Document Translation Example

A problem is something that presents itself as a barrier to the organizations ability to achieve it's goal.

Articulating the problem requires the owner to identify the gap between the current condition and the desired performance at any given time.

The root cause of the gap is identified by examining how the work is currently being performed and asking why the problem occurs.



Clear definition provides effective countermeasures.

A3 Document Translation Example

Project Title _____ Project Leader _____ Business Area _____

Background		Propose Counter Measures		
Acme plant to double capacity. Much document translation required • Poor English translations of Japanese documents caused many problems at original plant startup. • Expansion plans call for aggressive launch timeline and cost reduction.				
Cause	Countermeasure	Description	Benefit	Responsible/support
A	Central document-flow tracking process	Overall process ownership established Document flow and timing management - Timing control chart; weekly check - Segmentation by document type	Delivery Quality Cost	Porter - Each department - Vendors
B	Standard vocabulary database and templates	Standard terms for processes, equipment tools, work flow across job sites Create standard templates and include photos and videos Gathered from each department, input into database for use by internal document creators and translators	Quality	Administration IT Each department
C	Standard vendor three-step process	Step ① Translation by topic specialist Step ② Rewrite by native English speaker Step ③ Check by highly skilled bilingual	Quality Delivery	Administration - Each vendor - Procurement

Target-state map

Acme Administration: ABC sort, Weekly process check (Daily)

Vendor specific: V₁, V₂, V₃ (1-2 days)

Translators: T₁ - T₃ (1-5 days)

IT: IT, Mfg, Admin, Eng, Sales

Lead time: 1-2 weeks

Timing and workload schedule

Original startup actual: 39 weeks out

Expansion proposal: 32 weeks out

Volume curves shown relative to Launch.

Implementation Plan			
Timeline	Responsible	Support	Review

Follow-up

Technical engineering documents vs Office documents: Volume, Delivery and lead-time generation problems, Error and lead-time generation problems.

Lost in translate

Translation problems:

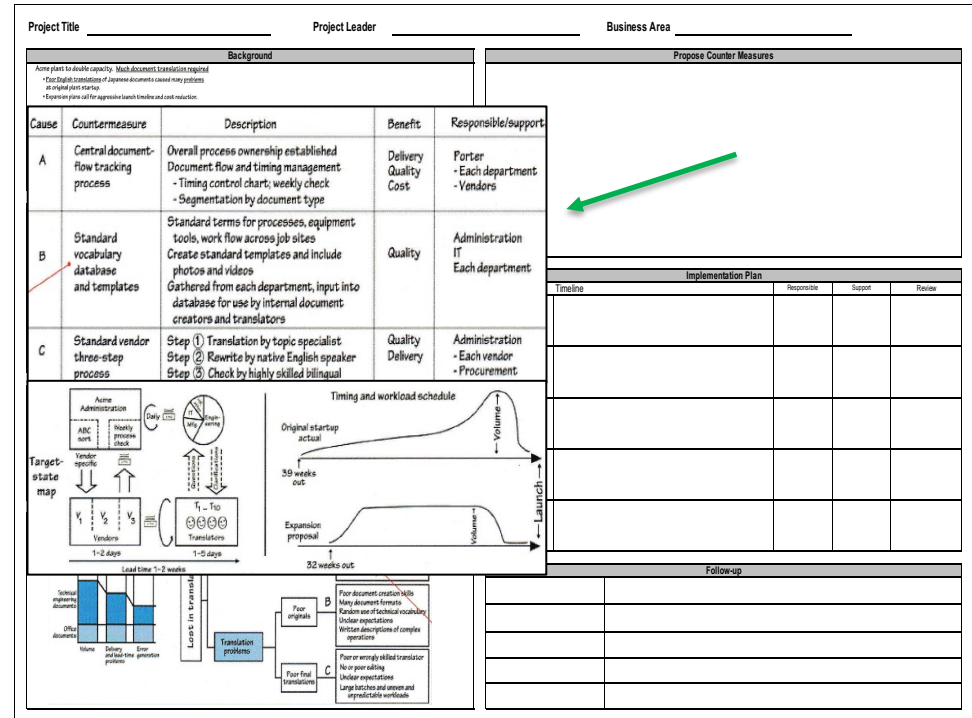
- Poor originals (B): Poor document creation skills, Many document formats, Random use of technical vocabulary, Unclear expectations, Written descriptions of complex operations.
- Poor final translations (C): Poor or wrongly skilled translator, No or poor editing, Unclear expectations, Large batches and uneven and unpredictable workloads.

A3 Document Translation Example

A problem is something that presents itself as a barrier to the organizations ability to achieve it's goal.

Articulating the problem requires the owner to identify the gap between the current condition and the desired performance at any given time.

The root cause of the gap is identified by examining how the work is currently being performed and asking why the problem occurs.



A3 Document Translation Example

Project Title _____ Project Leader _____ Business Area _____

Background

Acme plant to double capacity. Much document translation required at original plant startup.

- Poor English translations of Japanese documents caused many problems
- Expansion plans call for aggressive launch timeline and cost reduction.

Document translation problems could impede launch

Current Condition

Deliverables	Timeline	Responsible	Support	Review
Overall Launch Timeline	Timeline with Nema-washi and A3 authorization	Administration/Porter	Each department	Plant management Committee Japan-HQ
Planning	Evaluate Bid, Select	Procurement	Administration/Each department	
Vendors	Three-step process	Procurement	Administration/Each department	
Document creation	Complete, Ongoing updates	Each department	Administration/Porter	Each department
Database and templates		Administration/Carter	IT (Rick and Terry)	Administration/Sanderson
Training		Each department	HR	
Creating documents		Each department	Administration	
Document translation management system	A, B, C start	Administration/Porter	Each department	Administration/Sanderson
Flow segmentation	Weekly check		Ana	
Traffic control chart				
Midproject review				

Propose Counter Measures

Cause	Countermeasure	Description	Benefit	Responsible/support
A	Central document-flow tracking process	Overall process ownership established Document flow and timing management - Timing control chart, weekly check - Segmentation by document type	Delivery Quality Cost	Porter Each department Vendors
B	Standard vocabulary database and templates	Standard terms for processes, equipment tools, work flow across job sites Create standard templates and include photos and videos Gathered from each department, input into database for use by internal document creators and translators	Quality	Administration IT Each department
C	Standard vendor three-step process	Step ① Translation by topic specialist Step ② Rewrite by native English speaker Step ③ Check by highly skilled bilingual	Quality Delivery	Administration Each vendor Procurement

Analysis

Lost in translation

- Lost: 85% lost or stuck (Cause A)
- Translation problems: Poor originals (Cause B), Poor final translations (Cause C)

Implementation Plan

Timeline	Responsible	Support	Review

Follow-up

A3 Document Translation Example

Project Title _____ Project Leader _____ Business Area _____

Background

Acme plant to double capacity. Much document translation required

- Poor English translations of Japanese documents caused many problems at original plant startup.
- Expansion plans call for aggressive launch timeline and cost reduction.

Document translation problems could impede launch!

Current Condition

Problems:
 Cost = 10% over budget
 Delivery = Over 50% late; long, variable lead times
 Quality = Much rework > 50%; many errors reach customer
 Overall = (C)

Goals/Targets

Quality - 0 defects at launch
 - Rework less than 10%

Propose Counter Measures

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Implementation Plan

Deliverables	Timeline	Responsible	Support	Review
Overall Launch Timeline	Timeline with milestones: Nema-washi, A3 authorized, LAUNCH	Administration/ Porter	Each department	Plant management Committee Japan HQ
Planning	Evaluate, Select	Procurement/ Frances	Administration/ Each department	
Vendors	Three-step process	Administration/ Porter	Administration/ Porter	
Document creation	Compile, Ongoing updates	Each department - Administration/ Carter	- IT (Rick and Terry)	Each department Administration/ Sanderson
Database and templates		Each department	- HR	
Training				

Midterm Review | Ensure ongoing collaboration
 Prelaunch Review | Monitor system weekly, all metrics, especially quality and delivery

Lost in translation

Category	Issue	Percentage	Cause
Lost	85% lost or stuck	A	Large batches Random cases: → No ability to track → Unclear expectations
	Poor originals	B	Poor document creation skills Many document formats Random use of technical vocabulary Unclear expectations Written descriptions of complex operations
Translation problems	Poor or wrongly skilled translator	C	No or poor editing Unclear expectations Large batches and uneven and unpredictable workloads
	Poor final translations		

Follow-up

Item	Status

A3 Document Translation Example

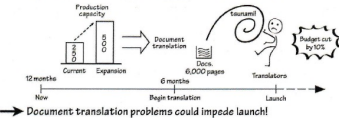
Project Title _____

Project Leader _____

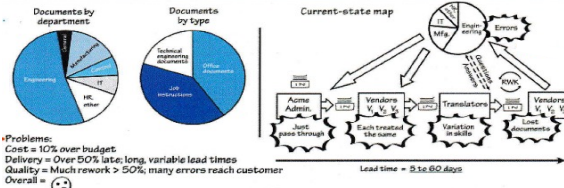
Business Area _____

Background

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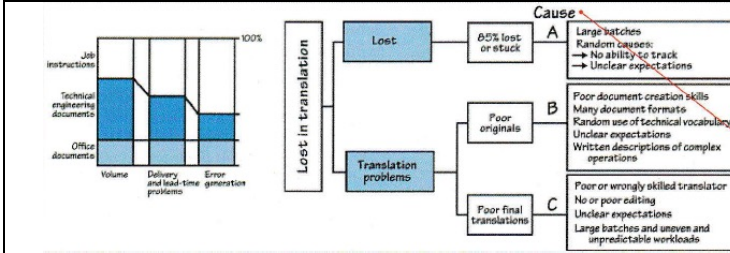
Current Condition



Goals/Targets

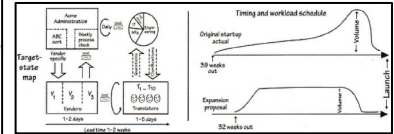
- Quality**
 - 0 defects at launch
 - Rework less than 10%
- Delivery**
 - 100% on-time
 - Level weekly volume
 - Consistent short lead time with predictable delivery
- Cost**
 - 10% decrease - rework down: overtime down

Analysis



Propose Counter Measures

Cause	Countermeasure	Description	Benefits	Responsible/support
A	Central document flow tracking process	Overall process ownership established Document flow and timing management - Timing control chart; weekly check - Segmentation by document type	Delivery Quality Cost	Porter - Each department - Vendors
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Implementation Plan

Deliverables	Timeline	Responsible	Support	Review
Overall Launch Timeline	Timeline showing overall launch timeline with milestones: Nema-washi, AS authorized, Evaluate, Select, Complete, Ongoing updates, A, B, C start, Weekly check.	Administration/ Porter	Each department	Plant management Committee Japan HQ
Planning	Timeline showing planning phase with milestones: Evaluate, Select, Complete, Ongoing updates.	Administration/ Porter	Each department	Administration/ Sanderson
Vendors	Timeline showing vendor selection phase with milestones: Evaluate, Select, Complete, Ongoing updates.	Procurement	Administration/ Each department	Administration/ Sanderson
Document creation - Database and templates	Timeline showing document creation phase with milestones: Complete, Ongoing updates.	Each department Administration/ Porter	IT (Rick and Terry)	Administration/ Sanderson
Document creation - Training	Timeline showing training phase with milestones: Complete, Ongoing updates.	Each department	HR	Administration
Document creation - Creating documents	Timeline showing document creation phase with milestones: Complete, Ongoing updates.	Each department	Administration	Administration/ Sanderson
Document translation management system	Timeline showing document translation management system phase with milestones: A, B, C start, Weekly check.	Administration/ Porter	Each department Ana	Administration/ Sanderson
Midproject review	Timeline showing midproject review phase with milestones: Weekly check.	Administration/ Porter	Each department Ana	Administration/ Sanderson

Follow-up

Midterm Review	Ensure ongoing collaboration
Prelaunch Review	Monitor system weekly, all metrics, especially quality and delivery

The Problem Solving Template (A3)

- The A3 Problem Solving template lays out an entire plan, large or small, on one sheet of paper
- It should be visual and extremely concise
- It should tell a story, laid out from upper left-hand side to lower right, which anyone can understand
- What is important is not the format, but the process and thinking behind it
- It fosters dialogue
- It develops problem solvers

Plan-Do-Check-Act



Problem-Solving Story

Problem-Solving Story

Problem: _____

Date: _____

Goal: _____

Team Members: _____

Quantify!

Sketch
Picture
Spreadsheet

xyz	
abc	
zyx	
def	
urs	



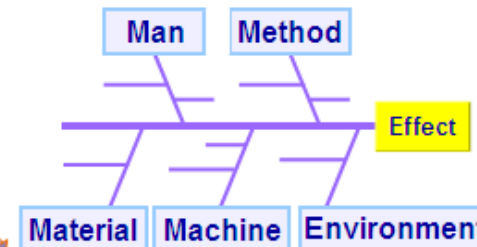
Step 1: Define the problem

- What is the problem?
- Why should the problem be addressed?
- How does the problem affect customers?
 - What are the consequences?
- How will progress be measured?
- What graphics do you have to illustrate the problem? Place data on storyboard.
- Where does the problem occur, when does it occur, and who does it involve?
- How will the focus (scope) of the project be narrowed?

Step 2: Identify the causes of the problem

- What potential causes were identified?
- How were the causes verified?

Fishbone Diagram

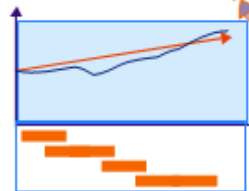


5 Why Analysis



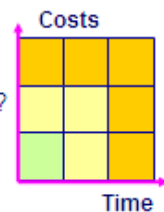
Step 4: Monitor the results

- What are you monitoring?
 - Compare actual results to the identified goal
- How are you using the data?
- Have we met our initial goal?
- Is there a need for additional improvements?
 - Make any necessary adjustments
- How are you communicating the results? Are you...
 - Documenting the new process?
 - Training current and new employees?
- How are you monitoring the Form G Action Plan?
 - What revisions have you needed to make?



Step 3: Problem-solving

- What solutions were considered and evaluated?
- How did the solutions address the causes of the problem?
- What is the plan for:
 - Testing or piloting the solution?
 - Introducing it on a large schare?
 - Monitoring the progress and success?
- How easy to follow is the plan for implementation?
- Use Form G to define an Action Plan
 - What needs to be done?
 - Who is responsible?
 - When is it due?




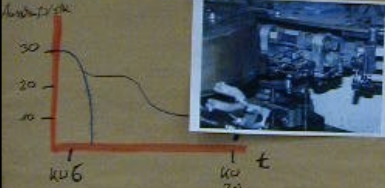

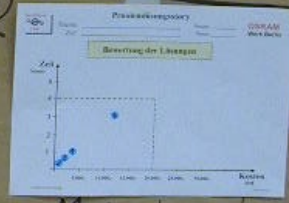
Problem Solving Story - Manufacturing

Problemlösungsstory


Thema: Gestellbau zum Übersetzen

Ziel: Verminderung des Bruchs, Reinigung und Mischzeit

Ist: Gestellteile zum Übersetzen
Anzahl: ca. 20-30 Stück
Pro Stück ca. 5,70 €
124.000 € pro Jahr

Überprüfung durch Strichliste




Maßnahmenplan

1	IMI zur Überprüfung der Fertigkeit der Gestellteile ausrichten	Erreichte	KW 10
2	Erreichte	Erreichte	KW 7
3	Erreichte (Material)	Erreichte	KW 2
4	Lehre für Gestellwasserstände	Ratlos / unvollst. Erreichte	KW 20

Matrice Résolution Problème Problème: LAMP DOESN'T START

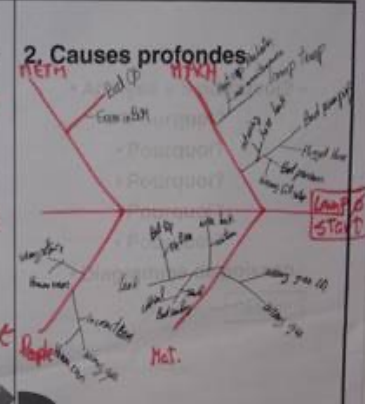
Date: 06/11/06 Qui: J.C. B.G. M.C.

 **TPM - DR**

1. Description du problème

- LAMP DON'T START AT 108V
- Bad lamp all from same exhaust
- Press spec 2.3@2.7t
- Actual press 2.9t
- Agent 828

2. Causes profondes



4. Vérification des résultats

Long instruction on Action 23

Results after correction

- LAMP 1: 2.4 Torr
- LAMP 2: 2.5 Torr
- LAMP 3: 2.4 Torr

3. Actions correctives

Item	Target	Actual	OK
LAMP 1	2.3-2.7	2.4	OK
LAMP 2	2.3-2.7	2.5	OK
LAMP 3	2.3-2.7	2.4	OK

Summary

- A3s are deceptively simple
- A3 reports, and more importantly the underlying thinking, embody a critical core strength of a lean company
- A3s serve as mechanisms for managers to mentor others in root-cause analysis and scientific thinking, while also aligning the interests of individuals and departments throughout the organization by encouraging productive dialogue and helping people learn from one another