

Synchronous Solutions

The continuous pursuit of excellence

Complacency

The scourge of continuous improvement.

If you always do what you've
always done, you'll always get what
you've always got.

Complacency is an attitude. A bad one. It is a sense of satisfaction with the company's situation that causes workers to believe that there is no need to try any harder. It is also a perception of defeat. Complacency is the enemy of excellence and can be the single largest threat to any business. A complacent workforce never strives to reach higher potential because they feel that it is pointless.



When your people think that nothing more can be done to improve conditions, your company is doomed to failure because your competition will overtake you and you will be left behind.

There are many signals of workforce complacency. If you hear any of the following statements from your people, you should be genuinely concerned:

- That's just the way things are around here. We just accept it and deal with it every day.
- We tried to correct those issues before and it didn't work.
- We are as good as we can be given the realities of our business.
- It's easier just to deal with those chronic problems than to try to prevent them.
- We don't have the time to invest in improvement initiatives.
- Goals? Yes, my goal is just to make it through each day.

Those are statements of defeat. When that kind of thinking is dominant in your business, you will be assured of lackluster performance and ultimate failure. You must take action to defeat this condition. Change must start with you.

Business performance never stays the same. You will either be getting better or getting worse.

Choose better.

The primary point is:

If you are not satisfied with your business results, you must change your system.

The continuous pursuit of excellence should be the culture in your company.

You can't just wish for things to improve. You also can't just demand that people work harder. Improved results will only come with changing the way your company does what it does. You must reset the approach you practice every day. You must change the culture.

Insanity has been defined as continuing to do the same things while expecting different results.

You, as a leader of your organization, must set the stage for continuous improvement, which is the opposite of complacency.

- **Continuous** means it never ends. It means *forever*. It means “there is no finish line.”
- **Pursuit** means “striving for.” It means setting a goal that is a stretch so that it is a challenge to your business.
- **Excellence** should be the Goal of every organization. It means that you should never be satisfied. There will *always be opportunities for improvement*.

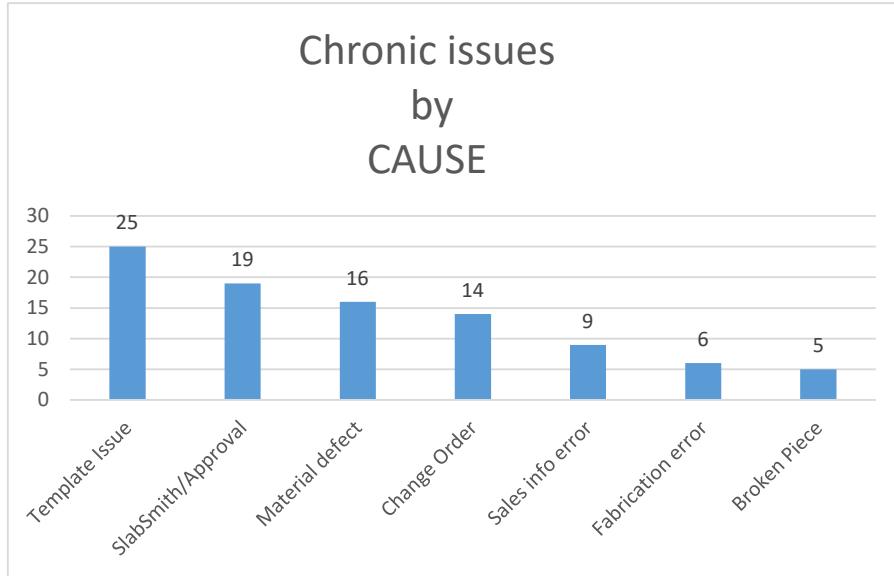
Improvement only occurs with *change*. But not every change will result in an improvement. The challenge is to pick the right changes and make them happen. It is not about making changes just for the sake of change. It is certainly not about “greasing the squeaky wheel.” Effective improvements come from addressing the most chronic and the most advantageous opportunities. That means that you must measure performance every day so that you can know what to change.

“If you can't measure it, you can't manage it.”

The questions you should ask are:

- What to change?
- Change to what?
- How to accomplish the change?

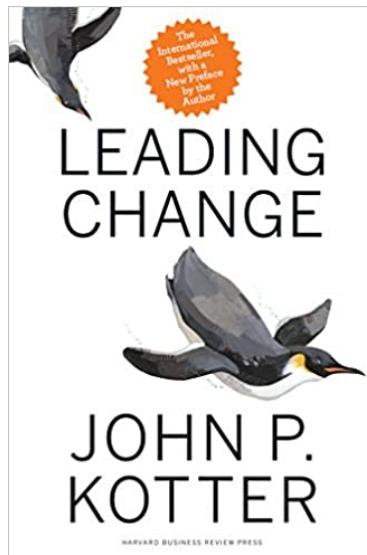
The only way to know the answers to those questions is to continually measure your business Key Performance Indicators (KPI). You must know what the real issues are and not just the most common complaints. Charting information like in the Pareto graph below will direct you to the most beneficial actions.



Pick the most advantageous opportunity and don't try to fix everything at once. Establish data on the current situation and identify the specifics on what you want to improve. That will tell you "What to change."

The second question, "Change to what" is a matter of setting realistic and attainable goals. Be specific with defined measures that clearly show status to the goals you have set. A clear definition of the desired result is essential to achieving success. Define the behaviors that have led to the problem and those that much change to achieve the results. You must change those behaviors and constantly follow-up to make sure that the improved results are sustained. Make a plan to systemically attack every change initiative.

"How to accomplish the change" is best described in Leading Change, a book by John Kotter. Dr. Kotter is a Harvard researcher who has studied hundreds of companies that have engaged in improvement initiatives. The striking revelation in his book is that the majority of change initiatives do not achieve the desired results. But his research also identified those actions that are required to produce results. Follow the steps identified in this book and you will realize desired results from change initiatives.



Leading Change identified an eight-step process to accomplish desirable change and achieve lasting results.

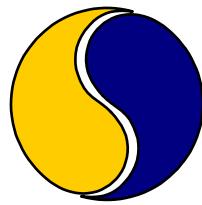
1. **Establish a sense of urgency.** Help your people to see the need for change through a bold statement that communicates your view of the importance of acting immediately. Present it as an opportunity that can't be disregarded. Make it clear that performance enhancement is not limited to bottom-line results for the company but also include improved *quality of life* for all those who work in your business.
2. **Build a Guiding Coalition.** This is a carefully selected group of cross-functional leaders in your company. They should be open-minded, respected by the other workers and willing to challenge the status quo. This group should be charged with making the improvements happen.
3. **Create a clear vision of success.** With the help of the Guiding Coalition, articulate the results that will define sustained victory. Defining the "spot on the horizon" is important to drive the important behaviors.
4. **Communicate the vision and the status to goals.** Visual performance information, updated and posted for all to see, is a great way to keep the initiative alive and active. Make status to goals an element of regular management and employee meetings. Keep the initiatives on the "front burner" so that their importance will never be in doubt.
5. **Avoid obstacles to success.** It should be expected that there will be obstacles, even temporary setbacks, in any improvement initiative. Treat these as challenges to be overcome. Never let a difficulty become a failure.
6. **Celebrate short-term wins.** While the ultimate target is the goal, interim objectives can generate enthusiasm among the people responsible for the project. Never miss an opportunity to complement the Team for progress toward the goals.
7. **Don't declare victory too soon.** Conversely, be careful to keep the ultimate goal paramount in the view of the Team. Short-term wins should be recognized, but the final result must remain the target.
8. **Establish a culture of *Continuous Improvement*.** Make getting better and better an essential element of your business. Track and communicate KPI's every day. Identify the best opportunities to accomplish your mission.

Your mission:
**Improve the quality of life and
economic wellbeing of all
stakeholders.**

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People
by Stephen Covey

Complacency is the enemy of progress. It is the duty of the business leaders to defeat the nemesis of complacency. It is a never-ending challenge but one that will produce excellent results for everyone in the business.

Lasting improvement requires
systemic change.



If you want more information on how to do all this, please contact me directly.

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