



Linea Insights

What is Continuous Improvement in Business?

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Good businesses are always seeking ways to refine what they do, enhance their profitability, and pursue the most effective route to sustainable growth. World class operations work to the principal that no process can ever be declared perfect but can always be improved. Improvement, however, is relative and will shift over time, what looks like excellence today, probably will not tomorrow.

Continuous improvement is the endless pursuit to improve products, services, and processes, through sound strategy, focused on customer value and the empowerment of people at every level of the organisation continuously assessing ways to improve operations

The result is a creative mixture of incremental improvement achieved over time and breakthrough improvement achieved all at once.



How does Continuous Improvement work?

The overall CI principle can be simply defined - it is the process through which an organisation works to continually improve all aspects of what it does and how it operates

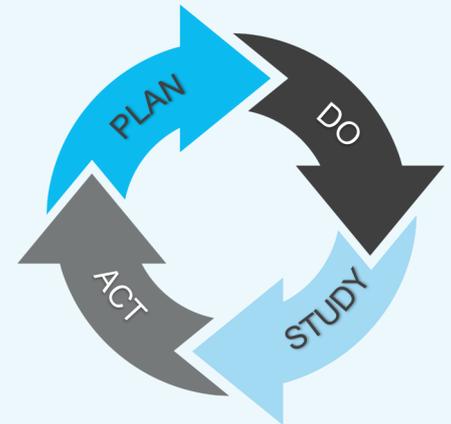
Among the most widely used tools for the continuous improvement model is a four-step quality assurance method—the plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycle:

Plan: Identify an opportunity and plan for change.

Do: Implement the change on a small scale.

Study: Use data to analyse the results of the change and determine whether it made a difference.

Act: If the change was successful, implement it on a wider scale and continuously assess your results. If the change did not work, begin the cycle again.



Other widely used approaches include Lean, Six Sigma and Agile, which emphasize employee involvement and teamwork, whilst measuring and systematising processes, to reduce variation, minimise defects, and improve cycle times. Ultimately, these approaches help to deliver better products and services

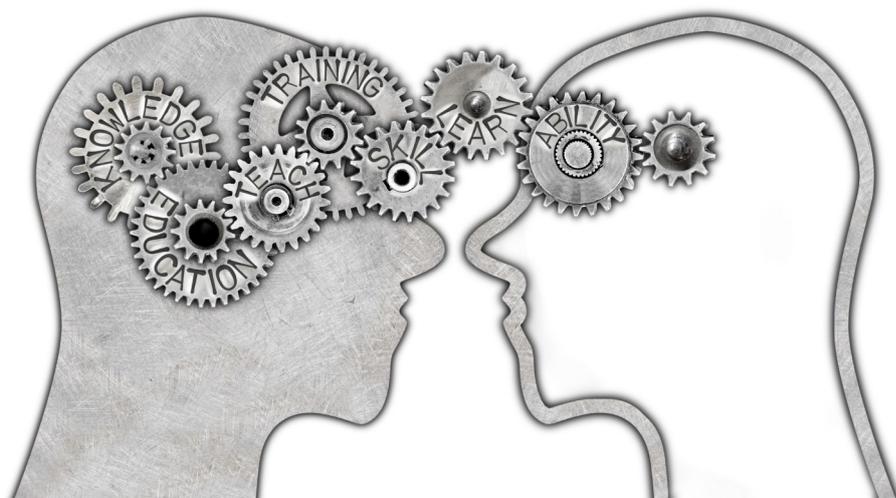
- Regularly review internal tools and processes
- Streamline the structure of the business
- Identify efficiencies and ways to reduce waste
- Upskill the workforce
- Expand the knowledge base of the management team
- Align the working culture with the company's goals and values

Exactly what this process looks like will vary from company to company, depending on the industry and the specific challenges they face. However, what marks out a formalised CI plan from a piecemeal approach to incremental change is the willingness to create and implement a unified approach to organisation-wide improvement.

A continuous improvement programme comprises different elements, designed to embed a culture of self-sustainable improvement in the ongoing pursuit of excellence. This includes:

- Carrying out a comprehensive review of your organisation's current challenges, to identify the root-causes of any existing problems and operational limitations, whilst identifying opportunities for improvement
- Assessing the company's financial performance, spending priorities and investment strategy, to identify and prioritise opportunities for efficiency, productivity, and quality enhancement
- Developing a transparent and measurable roadmap for improvement, which will be communicated across the whole company. This will include clear metrics for how success will be measured, and explain the logic behind each of the company's chosen targets and objectives
- Encouraging greater knowledge-sharing and communication throughout the business, empowering staff at all levels to present their suggestions on how the business can improve, and the requisite support to make it happen
- Transferring knowledge and building capability to assist staff to augment their skills and expertise
- Embedding a culture of change across your entire organisation, securing the buy-in of your team by communicating the benefits of continuous improvement, and demonstrating how staff can become part of this change
- Monitoring the performance of CI initiatives over time, making changes and refinements to your transformational strategy according to what works best, and adjusting the evolving realities of your chosen marketplace.

To achieve the best results, many organisations choose to work with a dedicated business transformation and change management specialist such as Linea, to benefit from external perspectives and best practice expertise.



What are the benefits of continuous improvement?

If implemented correctly, your CI programme will deliver significant benefits to your entire organisation in the short, medium, and long term. These include:

- **Improved efficiency** and productivity across the entire organisation
- **Lower costs** and better targeted spending, leading to improved return on investment
- **Reduced wastage** in terms of time and resources
- **Higher-quality** products and service delivery, ensuring greater customer and client satisfaction.
- **Increased employee engagement** and job satisfaction
- **Steady growth** in your workforce and management team's expertise and knowledge, enabling better decision-making and easier long-term succession planning
- **Improved flexibility** and agility, making the company more responsive and able to adapt to changing industry conditions and trends
- **Greater unity** across the organisation, with all team members working together to deliver a single coherent and proven business methodology.

For these reasons, continuous improvement in business should be considered a key priority for any organisation, whether you are looking to transform the fortunes of a company in transition or consolidating the success of an industry-leading enterprise.

We help businesses to outperform the competition through a continuous improvement process, leveraging our expertise in process improvement & efficiency. Our team utilises operational excellence methodologies such as Lean Six Sigma, EFQM and Agile to drive a continuous improvement cycle, enhancing performance and efficiency across frontline operations and corporate support services.

Our services comprise:

- Strategic alignment & deployment
- Process improvement & efficiency
- Procurement & supply chain optimisation
- Organisational development
- Workforce empowerment
- Lean Six Sigma programme deployment

Find out more

If you would like to learn more about what continuous improvement in business could look like for your organisation, get in touch with the business transformation specialists at Linea today.

You can find out more about [how we can help](#) your company to review and transform its operational strategy, or explore our various industries pages to see what kind of continuous improvement advice we can offer for your specific sector.

Please call us on **+44 (0) 124 442 1095** or complete our [contact form](#) to request a call back any time.



About the Author



Ian Chambers

A Business Improvement specialist with over 20 years' experience devising and leading complex Operational and Financial Turnaround, Transformation and Continuous Improvement Programmes.

With a background in Change Management, Lean Transformation, Financial & Commercial Management, Supply Chain / Procurement Optimisation and Programme Delivery gained within leading UK and International Public and Private sector organisations.

Ian possess an extensive track record of devising, managing and implementing comprehensive, multi-million pound, cross organisational transformation and continuous improvement programmes for NHS, Public and Private organisations and is an expert in delivering sustainable operational improvement and financial balance in challenging situations.

He received national recognition for collaborative programme delivery in the Government Efficiency Awards, was shortlisted as finalist in two further National Awards for NHS Transformation and achieved runner-up in the IFT Public Sector Turnaround Programme of the Year.

Ian holds an Honours degree in Business Management, is a Fellow at the Institute for Consulting, Fellow at the Institute for Operations Management, Fellow at the Chartered Management Institute, Fellow at the Institute of Logistics and Transport, Member of the Asia Transformation & Turnaround Association. Member of the Institute for Turnaround and committee member for the IFT North of England.

He has held numerous board and senior advisory positions, is a certified Lean Practitioner, Master Coach and a member of government and corporate turnaround panels.

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