

## What is Process Improvement?

Process Improvement applies **continuous improvement methodology**<sup>1</sup> to deliver **value to the customer, on demand** through:

- Implementing **solutions driven by the people who do the work** (bottom up rather than top-down)
- **Investing in employees**



## Waste is Disrespectful:

Waste, in terms of process improvement, is anything *that doesn't add value to the customer*. Waste impacts three main categories:

- **Humanity:** waste is disrespectful to humanity because it wastes scarce resources.
- **Citizens:** waste is disrespectful to citizens because it asks them to pay for processes with no value.
- **Individuals:** waste is disrespectful of individuals because it asks them to do work with no value.

It is up to the employee to identify waste and discover how to remove or reduce it in a way that adds value to the customer.

## The Five Principles of Innovation:

The Toyota Production System, pioneered by Taiichi Ono, uses five core principles that guide innovation:

1. Identify the **value that your customers demand**.
2. **Map the steps** required to deliver value to your customers.
3. Deliver value to customers **on demand** ("Pull")
4. Deliver value to customers **without waste** ("Flow")
5. Seek perfection: **standardize and solve** to improve.

Each of these core principles should be considered during the process of solving a problem. Most of these are rather self-explanatory, but what does "flow" actually mean? Flow is when work seems effortless, almost as if you could do it in your sleep. It's what is felt by a baseball pitcher when they throw a perfect game or a basketball player when they make every shot. In terms of a process, it's when everything happens correctly, on time, at the right place, and delivers the value the customer wants.

As you may have noticed, the fifth principle says "seek perfection." Note the word "seek"; perfection is something that may never be achieved, but anything can be improved. That is why this is called *process improvement* and not *process perfection*.

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<sup>1</sup> Developed by Toyota through their Toyota Production System  
Notes:

**Please answer the questions below to aid in your understanding.**

Describe the values your customers demand from your processes.

Are there ways your current processes are wasteful? Do your processes use physical/time resources inefficiently?

Describe what you think “*flow*” might look like in your job or your life in general:

Notes: