A3 Thinking

A3 Thinking

The **A3 tool** is named after the A3 paper size (11.7 x 16.5 inches).

This is because the tool is created on a single A3 size page to ensure that one is sharing only essential information and it can be easily visualized.

The **A3 thinking** process is a structured way of problem solving and improvement that encourages creative and logical thinking (step by step). It is a modified version of the PDCA/PDSA.

The A3 tool is used to guide A3 thinking.

Using the A3; Before you begin

Step 1: Determine if you actually need to use an A3.

An A3 is useful for a repetitive problem that is measurable. It is also useful when working collaboratively. Using an A3 for all root cause analysis will be problematic and cumbersome.

Step 2: Collect data.

Once you have determined that an A3 is suitable, you need to gather data to understand the magnitude of the effect of the problem. This is useful baseline data. Remember to keep an open mind and do not jump to conclusions.,

Using the A3; Starting out

Step 3: Determine the team.
All stakeholders should be represented in an A3 process. You should not decide or assume on behalf of a team otherwise we will be addressing what we think is the problem and not the actual problem. Remember to apply humble inquiry, respect people and focus on the process.

Step 4: Begin Completing your A3
Give your A3 a Title and input that. Also fill in the date, collaborating teams and the Project Lead or Facilitator. Template available as resource

Step 5: State the Background/Current State
Give essential details that will help understand the problem. Consider these: What has been the process? What is the standard or requirement? What is happening currently?

Using the A3; Problems and Targets

Step 6: State the Problem
Answer this question - "What is wrong?" Remember to include when(or for how long), where, what and by how much.

Step 7: Set your Target
What do you aim to achieve? How much do you want to improve? When do you aim to achieve this Make it SMART(specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound).

Add a touch of ambitious. Even if you don't achieve your target, any improvement is a win. No improvement is also a win because you would now understand the problem better, and know what won't work.

Step 8: Analyze the root cause
Remember the RCA tools we talked about, it's time to apply them. Break down the problem to find the root cause using 5 whys or Fishbone.

Step 9: Experiments to root cause
Suggest solutions to test in an attempt to address the root cause. Remember to focus on priority problems in a Fishbone and not every single point raised. Refer to the session on Fishbone diagram if you need a refresher.

Using the A3; Follow up

Step 10: Study

Determine who will implement what and by when. A single experiment may be broken down into multiple tasks. Asana is a great tool to utilize here. Have regular check-ins to get updates and monitor progress. If you don't have these check-ins, there is a good chance that the improvement project will be abandoned.

Step 11: Adjust

Your target date is here, did you meet your target? Was there improvement? If yes, standardize your experiments and monitor for sustainability.

In cases where no improvement was observed on there is more room for improvement, consider taking the new information that you have and creating a second version of your A3

Conclusion

You have come to the end of the Lean Playbook Training. Well done!

It is important to remember that although tools help drive lean implementation, the key to a sustainable Lean organization is staff engagement and involvement, working with principles and commitment to continuous improvement.

Lean is a mindset that can only work when every team member embraces it. Have you?

The End