

Lean, Six Sigma + Critical Thinking

Lean-Sigma Expert Brad Wyrick

Brad is a Motorola Business Partner. Here he shares his expert opinion about applying the **BPI critical thinking methods** to **process improvement**. Brad and his team are certified **BPI** instructors.

"Whatever the industry, **speed is critical** to your business's competitiveness and health. There are more than 200 process improvement tools for organizations to choose from when looking at problems, opportunities, and growth potential. These tools can help . . . any product, process or service become simpler, smoother, and more stable. Critical thinking tools speed up how people think together and clean up logical gaps between tool sets. Taken together, the critical thinking tools form a framework. The framework is made up of questions designed to facilitate analysis of any situation by defining specific logical needs. This framework is perfect for integrating other tools to fill these logical needs when and if their unique contribution is needed to answer one of the questions.

"**BIG THREE: Lean Enterprise** tools reduce non-value added activities, create flow throughout the organization and reduce lead times dramatically. **Six Sigma** tools reduce variation in value added activities, stabilize processes, and build in repeatability. The failure of most process improvement initiatives occurs when organizations are missing **Critical Thinking** tools. They use a small collection of their favorite tools which often don't uncover the root cause of the problem or fail to inform them that they simply have a decision to make. Critical Thinking bridges the gap between Reactive and Proactive decision making.

"Incorporating the **Critical Thinking Process** into your tool box will reduce the time your teams spend on any project. Critical Thinking helps you to analyze the opportunity quickly and points you toward the right tools. Alice-In-Wonderland said, "*If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there.*" The question is; do you have a Problem to solve, a Decision to make, a Planning opportunity or a combination of all three? Spending time up front defining the purpose, focus and process will save you enormous amounts of time and effort down the road.

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"Symptoms of the need for improved critical thinking include: difficulty with (or avoidance of) complex issues, long meeting times with complaints of lack of progress or going in circles, frustration when attempting to influence others, and failure to agree or develop optimal, highest quality actions.

"If you are struggling to achieve breakthrough improvements, are uncertain about which improvement approach to adopt – or are relying on traditional TQM tools; we invite you to harness the synergy of Lean and Six Sigma with the speed of **Critical Thinking**. This will enable you to achieve fast, dramatic improvements in translating abstract desires from the Voice-of-the-Customers into concrete specifications and organizational requirements. Leaders will use this data to transform the strategic goals and processes in a way that delivers value to the end user.

Critical Thinking gives people a new and dramatic boost in thinking effectively and efficiently. These new principles offer tangible solutions to drastically cut the percentage of waste and to improve quality, productivity, and profitability. Properly applied, Critical Thinking will provide you a quicker return on investment."

Brad Wyrick

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