

Quality and Safety Series, Season 1, Episode 5: Process Mapping

The speaker is Christine Bailey, Quality Improvement Organization Executive Director, HSAG.

Speaker 1 (00:03):

So, today we're going to look at process mapping and analysis. We really want to look at what is a process and what does process mapping entail. Explore how you can use and what the benefits of the process mapping are, and look at the various types of process maps. Discuss the steps in creating a process map. So, what is a process? It's really a series of steps or common tasks to create a product, a service, and it's standardized so that you achieve a particular result. What is process mapping? And that's really, it's just a graphic representation of the steps to create that product or service. The process mapping uses shapes to represent each step, and it's really a big piece of our quality improvement methodologies. So, you'll find it in the Six Sigma DMAIC under "define," and in the PDSA under the "plan phase."

Speaker 1 (01:12):

So, what are the benefits of process mapping? It provides a singular overview of a process, and it helps us gain an understanding when we're trying to do a quality improvement initiative or a lean initiative. So, there's various types of process maps. So, you have the current state: it represents the process as it exists, and it's really important to start there. So, and that's including all the flaws. Try really hard when you are doing these, this current state process map that you don't try to fix things as you're mapping. It's really easy to do or think you know the answers. Really plot out that entire process because it will help you identify things you didn't know were even going on. And then future states. So, that is once we optimize the process. So, here's what it looked like, here's what the changes we're making. And then you have a very high-level process map.

Speaker 1 (02:17):

So, what are the steps for process mapping? First of all, you have to identify, you know, find you know where my problem is and identify the process to be mapped. Now, when you're doing this, make sure you know, part of that identifying the process is setting limits. So, the steps. There are some kind of standardized shapes that we use. You know, for beginning or end of a process is the circle. Those process steps are usually a square rectangle type shape. Of course, the directional flow is our arrow decisions. It's really important to make sure, you know, you include all those decision points, you know, our steps. We're going to set boundaries. We're going to determine that start and stop. And sometimes those are your first, your first pieces on the process map. And again, remember the scope.

Speaker 1 (03:18):

It's better to work on little processes and then put them together. Arrange the steps in order, discuss the results. You know, you might want to number the steps so that it's easier to identify and then you really want to transfer that completed map with dates and participant names. It's always good to keep that record so that when you are looking maybe to make more changes down the road, you have the date and who worked on it, and that should be your current state map. What I always use are sticky notes. And a lot of times, get a big roll of paper and I've done process mapping, line the wall. That way if you have to roll that process map up and move it so it



doesn't get disturbed, use those post-it notes. And then you can move them, because a lot of times you're plucking along and somebody goes, "wait, wait, wait, we do this."

Speaker 1 (04:17):

And then you have a decision point, or, "oh no, this step comes before this step." So, when you use those sticky notes, it really, really helps. I do that before I'd even put it in, you know, any other computer program. So, this is a little more complex. This is a swim lane. It's divided by different roles. That's what a swim lane looks like. It could be broken up by a person, by department. Often when we want to denote an interruption in a process. So, that shows kind of a break in the process. So, value stream mapping. So, we talk about value-added and non-value-added steps. We're trying to look at efficiencies, then we want to rearrange and then we see how can we take out those non-value added steps. Look at the things that are critical that we have to keep and how we can make it flow more efficiently.

Speaker 1 (05:24):

Don't take shortcuts. As tempting as it is, when you start this process mapping and you think you know what an issue is, don't stop. It's really important that you talk through each step. So, what are the key takeaways again? Process mapping is just a graphic representation of the steps within a process. Process mapping assists in making processes more lean or efficient. There are the several variations of your process map: your current state, your future state, your value stream, your swim lane. So, you know, know what you're doing. And, you know, you can always Google at what type of process map is best for you. The best results are achieved if mapping is done in a group setting. The group that's doing this should be very representative of those with a direct knowledge of the process.

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