

# PRINCIPLES FOR IMPROVING SYSTEMS

## *Methods for Seeking Consistency with Flexibility*

### STANDARDIZE

**1. Get people doing the same job to do it more alike.**

*“Are we reducing the number of ways that people are doing the same job or are we increasing them?”*

**2. Get people doing the same job to create “how to do it” standards. When people find it necessary to break a standard, then ask, “What’s wrong with the standard?” rather than “What’s wrong with the person?”**

*“Do we have clearer standards? Do we have a means for people to question the standards? Are we improving standards every six months?”*

**3. Reduce exceptions to the rule. When exceptions have to be made, ask “What’s wrong with the rules?”**

*“Are we decreasing or increasing the number of exceptions?”*

### SPEED-UP

**4. Reduce the number of steps, the number of people, and the flow distance of a process.**

*“Are we reducing or increasing the number of steps and people?”*

**5. Empower workers to make decisions.**

*“Are we moving decisions downward or are we taking decision authority away?”*

**6. Speed up feedback on errors.**

*“Are we finding and responding to errors more quickly?”*

**7. Shorten “set up” times so that people can move from one task to another very quickly.**

*“Are we making it easier or more difficult for people to move from one task to another?”*

**8. Focus improvement efforts on bottlenecks and constraints on the system.**

*“Have we figured out which is the slowest part of the process? Are we shortening lines and ‘back-ups’? lengthening them?”*

### SIMPLIFY

**9. Reduce memorization.**

*“Are we reducing or increasing the number of things to memorize?”*

**10. Decrease stockpiles. Order supplies more frequently and in smaller bundles. Keep materials nearby and precisely placed.**

*“Are we decreasing or increasing stockpiles? Are we making it easier or more difficult to find supplies and materials?”*

**11. Reduce the number of interruptions. Permit focused attention on one customer and one task at a time.**

*“Are we reducing or increasing the number of interruptions?”*

**12. Allocate resources to the front end of processes in order to reduce the most rework.**

*“Are we increasing or reducing the number of errors passed down from the front end of the process?”*

### CROSS-COVER

**13. Move towards generalists and away from specialists.**

*“Are we making people more or less able to cross-cover one another?”*

**14. Have fewer bosses and a flatter hierarchy.**

*“Are we making access from the top to the bottom of the organization more complicated or less complicated?”*