



QualityHelp Online Community

Continuous Improvement



Continual Improvement

versus

Continuous Improvement

Continual Improvement?

Many of us, in all spheres of life (not just in Business and IT Process Improvement), tend to use “**Continual Improvement**” interchangeably with “**Continuous Improvement**”.

This is similar to addressing our Customers as Clients or Consumers. (I tackled that topic in an article at QualityHelp, [Customer, Client or Consumer?](#)). Generally this is fine, because we all have a reasonable concept as to their “common” meaning.

In the language of quality, business process improvement and IT Service Management, there are distinct differences in both their meaning and application. We should understand the differences and start to apply the expressions where appropriate.

Continual Improvement?

Semantics

The clue to the difference is in the literal meanings:

- ❑ Continual means “Recurring frequently” ie. In stages or phases with implied breaks.
- ❑ Continuous means “Unceasing” ie. In an unbroken series

Hence **Continual Improvement** should relate to ongoing, phased tasks and outcomes associated with Business Process Improvement, Service Improvement Plans and IT Process Improvement.

Continual Improvement?

A traditional example of Continual Improvement –

- Wait for something to break
- Find the problem (and the cause)
- Repair it (or replace it)
- Fix the Root Cause

Continual Improvement?

Wikipedia

Continual Improvement Process (abbreviated as **CIP** or **CI**), is an ongoing effort to improve products, services, or processes. These efforts can seek "incremental" improvement over time or "breakthrough" improvement all at once. Delivery (customer valued) processes are constantly evaluated and improved in the light of their efficiency, effectiveness and flexibility.

Continual Improvement?

ITIL v3 Continual Service Improvement stage (CSI)

Service Review Objective: To review business services and infrastructure services on a regular basis. The aim of this process is to improve service quality where necessary, and to identify more economical ways of providing a service where possible.

Process Evaluation Process Objective: To evaluate processes on a regular basis. This includes identifying areas where the targeted process metrics are not reached, and holding regular bench markings, audits, maturity assessments and reviews.

Definition of CSI initiatives Process Objective: To define specific initiatives aimed at improving services and processes, based on the results of service reviews and process evaluations. The resulting initiatives are either internal initiatives pursued by the service provider on his own behalf, or initiatives which require the customer's cooperation.

Monitoring of CSI Initiatives Process Objective: To verify if improvement initiatives are proceeding according to plan, and to introduce corrective measures where necessary.



Continual Improvement – Macro View

Business Process Improvement

Dr H. James Harrington and associates from Ernst & Young published an excellent and comprehensive workbook, as a hands-on implementation guide to his best-selling *Business Process Improvement*.

The *Business Process Improvement Workbook* provided detailed management guidance and tools, to deliver a Continual Improvement Programme to ailing corporations. The tools allowed the corporations to:

- **Slash their bureaucracies**
- **Eliminate workflow bottlenecks**
- **Stop effort duplication**
- **Root out obsolescence and waste**

Continual Improvement – Macro View

Business Process Improvement

The six phases worked through in the Business Process Improvement Plan are:

Phase I - Organisation: Organising for Process Improvement

Phase II - Documentation: Selecting a documentation approach

Phase III – Analysis: Defining Improvement opportunities

Phase IV – Design: Designing the new administrative business approach

Phase V - Implementation: Installing the future state solution

Phase VI – Management: Managing the administrative business process organisation for
Continuous Improvement

Note that, without Continuous Improvement Process in the final phase, the CI Plan will fail.

Continuous Improvement?

Wikipedia

Continuous Improvement Process (otherwise known as CIP or CI) is a management process whereby delivery processes (customer valued) are being **constantly** checked, evaluated and improved accordingly, with regards to efficiency, their level of effectiveness and flexibility.

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Kaizen

Kaizen is Japanese for "improvement", or "change for the better" , and refers to the philosophy or practices that focus upon continuous improvement of processes in manufacturing, engineering, and business management. It has been applied in healthcare, psychotherapy, life-coaching, government, banking, and other industries.

When used in the business sense and applied to the workplace, kaizen refers to activities that continually improve all functions, and involves all employees from the CEO to the assembly line workers. It also applies to processes, such as purchasing and logistics, that cross organizational boundaries into the supply chain.



Continuous Improvement – Micro View

Continual Improvement – The Big Picture

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS  (macro-process for Business Process Management, Quality Management, Project Management)		
Entrenched in Delivery Excellence , Management Commitment and Organisational Transformation	Continual Improvement transforms the organisation by combining changes to company policy, practices and staff mind sets.	Changes and improvements may be large and strategic, or small and incremental. They are driven by 1. Response to changing customer needs and feedback, and 2. Waste and inefficient processes.
Quality Methodologies: TQM CMMI	Total Quality Management Capability Maturity Model Integrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Includes Committed Leadership, Strategic Planning, Information and Feedback, Customer Involvement, Cross-functional product design. ▪ Continual Improvement of organisational maturity from Level 2 (Managed) through to Level 4 (Quantitatively Managed) and Level 5 (Optimising) with a focus on Process Improvement
Kaizen - Entrenched in Operational Excellency across all teams and delivery processes	CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCESS  (micro-process for constant Problem Solving, Waste Removal, Customer Focus, Performance Measurement, Process Improvement, Staff Involvement and Training)	
Quality Methodologies: ITIL V4 Service Management ISO 9001:2008	ITIL and ISO 9000 provide the foundation disciplines for quality controls and delivery consistency	ITIL and ISO9000 systems establish standardised, repeatable processes, tools and methods providing consistent services and deliverables. Processes and procedures are quantitatively documented, catalogued and controlled. Focus is on service, product and customer.
Lean / Six Sigma	Lean, The Toyota Way, Six Sigma provide tools and methods for constant process improvement	Lean / Six Sigma CIP Tools: Pareto Analysis, 5 Why's for RCA, Statistical Process Control (SPC), PDCA (Plan Do Check Act) Cycle, DMAIC



Conclusions and Recommendations

The use of either term (**Continual** or **Continuous**) is generally accepted when referring to any type or method of improvement of the quality and consistent delivery of:

- Services**
- Products**
- Processes**
- Business Management**

Where Quality Management methods are defined and utilised to systematically transform businesses for the better, then -



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(Additional Slides)



Achieving Competitive Advantage

In his book *Enabling Excellence*, Timothy Pine describes in detail the 7 elements essential to achieving competitive advantage in business.

1. **Prevention**
2. **Customer Focus**
3. **Process Capability**
4. **Process Control**
5. **Variation Reduction**
6. **The Pareto Principle**
7. **Breakthrough Improvement**

This section discusses these elements in terms of continual improvement plans and ongoing continuous improvement activities.



References: