

The 3P Academy – Getting Busy People Fixing Tough Problems

Facilitator's Guide to 7 Wastes

Within the toolkit of the Lean methodology, 7 wastes is one of the most powerful tools, both for improving process performance and building the team-level ownership which at the heart of continuous improvement. When people think of waste, what goes in the bin is usually the first thing that springs to mind – but this is just half of one of the seven key types. Here's a glimpse of them all.



Transport is any place-to-place movement - of materials, people, part-finished work, finished items, or information. It can cause process delays and unpredictable flow, and there's a risk of items being lost or damaged in transit. Depending on what's being moved, it can also incur significant cost, and the need for specialist equipment and skills.

Inventory is any stock - of materials, part-finished work, finished items which haven't yet reached the customer, or information. There's again a risk of items getting lost, damaged or becoming obsolete while they're stored. The more you're storing, the more it'll cost, and the more complex a system you need for managing it. Having a lot of things stored also increases search times when you need to find something specific.



Motion is any kind of ergonomic movement – lifting, bending, stretching, moving things out of the way, taking things apart. It can be a huge part of cleaning or maintenance activities, but it's generally much less significant in transactional processes.

Waiting is either the items waiting for the next step in the process to happen, or the person waiting for the next piece of work to arrive. It may result from inventory (if something's working its way through a large queue), from batch processing, or from problems in passing work between teams.



Over production is making something which doesn't get consumed. For example, producing documents or sending emails which never get read, or training people in skills which they then never get to use. In physical processes, it can lead to an inventory of what's been over-produced, which then has to be managed or disposed of.

Over processing can show up in two ways: Either making something to a higher standard than is actually needed, or putting something through a more complicated route than needed. For example, having eight people approve a change when only two of them really understand its implications. Or having fifteen people attend a meeting where only six of them actually speak...



Defects waste also has 2 ways in which it can show up. Scrap is where something's so defective, it doesn't even make it through the process. For example, a request has been logged with the help desk which doesn't make sense. They've not been able to get hold of the requester for clarification, so it can't be actioned.

Or re-work – something wasn't right first time and needed completing or correcting for the item to progress through the process – which can often have a more significant effect on performance than people realise.

It's probably impossible to have a zero-waste process. But getting your process teams noticing the wastes in their day-to-day activities, and taking action to remove or reduce them, can massively improve both the process performance and the customer experience. As well as causing inefficiencies, the wastes are often the most common sources of frustration in the process – the things which keep people from doing more of what they're really meant to be doing. So reducing them creates the capacity for doing more of what matters, stress-free.

By building grass-roots ownership, it's also a huge stride towards developing a culture of continuous improvement – which is why it's one of the first steps we recommend in improving any process performance.



"The best thing about using the 7 wastes is they're simple to understand, and after a short training session everyone can contribute to identifying process improvements. We found wastes that we'd never have imagined, some of which we immediately addressed to great effect.

The buy-in is great, with operators being able to identify waste and then take part in the actions to remove them. This helped build and drive the continuous improvement culture within our business."

**Martin Wolstenholme, Group QHSE Compliance
Manager, Communisis Ltd**

Uncovering the Secret Super-Powers of 7 Wastes

With its place firmly at the heart of the Lean methodology, there are lots of resources exploring 7 wastes' effects on process performance and customer experience.

But less well reported is their effects on your people, and developing your continuous improvement culture – effects which can have an even greater impact on your long-term performance.



So let's explore those effects together

1. Getting the brains out of efficiency mode

Are you good at solving anagrams? Give this one a go. **Whirl**

Struggling? OK – how about this one... **Slapstick**

No? Let's try a third one... **Cinerama**

Did you get the third one? Most people who started with the first two words don't either. So let's try these instead... **Bat**. I'm not very good at anagrams, but even I can work out that rearranges to **Tab**.

How about **Lemon**...? Not too much of a stretch to make it **Melon**.

Most people starting with those two words easily spot the third solution too – it's **American**.

If you didn't spot it the first time round, it wasn't because you consciously decided not to bother. It's a pattern which psychologists call learned helplessness, but I prefer to think of it as brain efficiency mode. Our brains have evolved to conserve energy, and solving problems uses a lot of it. So when you encounter a problem which is similar to others you couldn't solve, efficiency mode kicks in, and you can easily miss solutions which are right there in plain sight.

When that's happening to people throughout the organisation, it can significantly affect performance. But efficiency mode is quite easy to stop – keep solving problems. Even if they're not the biggest, messiest ones. Even if the solutions appear to have little impact on performance. They might not, but keeping brains out of efficiency mode will do in the long run. And within 7 wastes, there'll be problems which every single person can own and solve.

2. Developing a Culture of Continuous Improvement

Which leads us nicely into the second super power. I work with a lot of organisations who think they've fully established Continuous Improvement. What they actually have is a busy change team, who take front line people's ideas and make them happen. That's part way there, but it's not true CI.

In a fully developed improvement culture, implementing improvement ideas is part of everyone's role. And 7 wastes are the most accessible way for that to start

3. Creating the capacity for bigger changes

The other thing people really underestimate about the power of small, incremental step changes, is their cumulative effect. A 2 minute work-around might seem like no big deal – not worth fixing.

But when that work-around is done 5 times a day, by each person in a team of 10, it adds up to an entire person-day every week. Time which can be far better invested in delivering bigger improvements. So when teams comment that they've no time to do anything differently, 7 wastes is the way to start creating that capacity. To start replacing the sticking plasters and fire-fighting with what actually works. And as many of the wastes also cause frustration, getting them gone is good for the stress levels too.



So now we understand just how important 7 wastes are, let's look at how to get all our people involved in spotting and resolving them...

Capturing the day-to-day wastes

7 wastes make the biggest impact when they become part of people's thinking, day-in, day-out. And that doesn't happen very effectively on the back of a one-off workshop. Over the years, I've found that it's far more effective to get people spotting and recording their wastes as they go about normal day-to-day working – 2 weeks is usually long enough to permanently set that new thinking habit.

It's easy to get overwhelmed by the number of wastes captured, so you might want to focus in on just one process or area. Some of the wastes have to get actioned, otherwise the whole exercise has been a waste, and people will disengage from similar activities in the future... So create some time and headspace to get the whole thing working...

- Start with a session introducing the wastes, and an exercise on spotting them in something outside their process which everyone knows well – I like to use getting ready for work in the morning.
- Set expectations – they'll identify loads of wastes which are impossible or impractical to get rid of. But those they do will start creating that capacity to work on others...
- Give each person taking part a pad of post-its (the 152mm oblong ones) and a Sharpie-type pen, and ask them to write down 1 waste per post-it as they spot them over the coming weeks
- Ask them to collate the wastes by type real-time, so you can keep an eye on how it's going.

To help keep it front of mind, you could offer a couple of small prizes – one for whoever thinks of the most wastes, and one for whoever spots the weirdest or most unexpected (as voted for by the team).

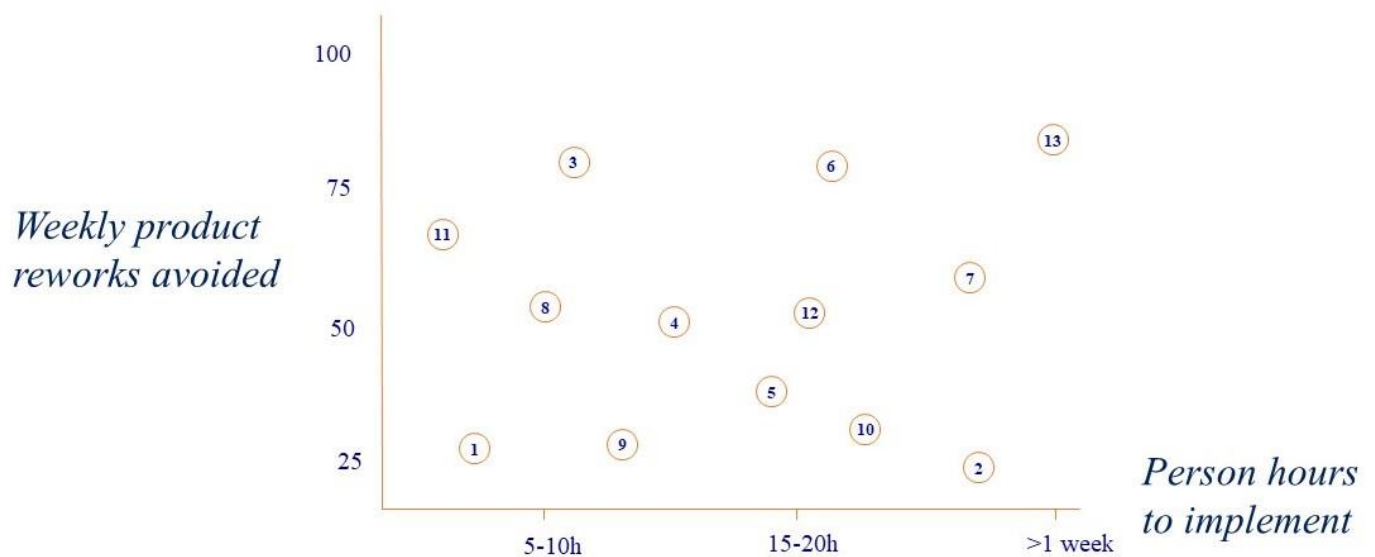
Turning it into an Action Plan

Once you've removed duplicates, it's not unusual to be left with several hundred wastes. Turning that into an action plan can feel daunting, but there's a really easy tool which can help...

Effort-Benefit Prioritisation

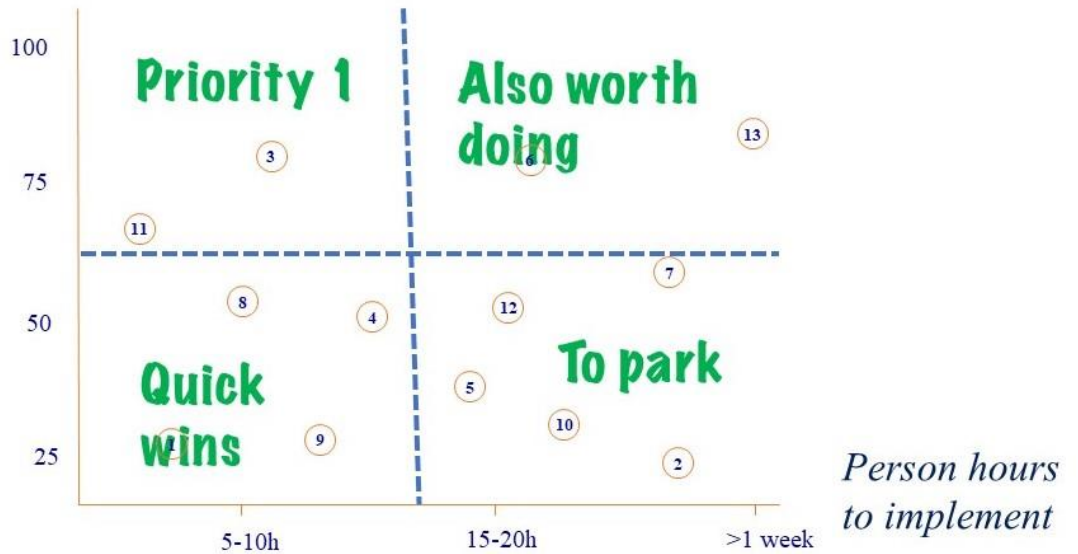
1. Collate the identified wastes into a numbered list (you can mix them up by type)
2. Draw two graph axes on a flipchart, whiteboard, or software of your choice
3. The x-axis usually represents our most scarce improvement resource – people's time. Draw three rough scale points on the axis – I usually use 5-10 hours, 15-20 hours, and > 1 week
4. Choose your y-axis scale – what's the biggest benefit you're looking to deliver? This could be weekly time saved, or customer complaints prevented. And choose 3 scale markings for that one.
5. Working with the team who identified the wastes, plot each listed waste's number where you think it would go on those axes, by estimating how much hands-on (rather than elapsed) time it would take to action, and how much benefit that's expected to give. There's a lot of guesswork in this, but with the right experience in the room, the guesses are usually accurate enough.

You should end up with something which looks like this (with a lot more numbers)



Then we divide it into 4 quarters as follows

Weekly product reworks avoided



Person hours to implement

Wastes in the top left are the first you should work on resolving (though being easy to do and very beneficial, there's often not much in this quarter).

Wastes in the bottom right corner are your lowest priority – probably not worth the effort they'd need. And the beauty of having the whole team own this output, is that people are far more willing to abandon their own ideas based on it, rather than have someone else tell them it wouldn't be worth doing.

I usually then split my team's efforts roughly evenly between the other two quarters. The quick wins to start harnessing those super-powers that we've explored, while we're getting started on some of the harder but more beneficial improvements.

Then keep it prioritised... Re-visit often, celebrate the wins, and keep tracking the y-axis metric (and probably others besides) to make sure you are having the anticipated impact. You may well find that the first few weeks are packed with high energy and enthusiasm. Then typically around week 4, it starts to flounder. We've cleared the majority of the easy stuff, and we're still navigating the delays and frustrations of the bigger improvements. Be ready, and keep the energy going by celebrating how far you've already come – because this easily gets forgotten when you're in the thick of it.

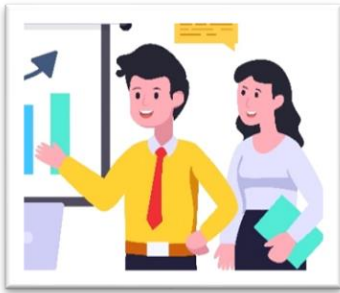
And of course, this isn't just a one-off exercise. As new wastes get spotted and new ideas emerge, make a way for them to be added to the plan and tracked too. Weaving performance enhancement properly into day-to-day working, and creating your genuine continuous improvement culture.



Introducing the 3P Academy - Getting Busy People Fixing Tough Problems

Delivering exceptional performance isn't easy, especially when everyone's busy. Even the most compelling vision and solid business case aren't always enough to deliver sustainable change, and the performance you know is possible.

The 3P Academy is dedicated to helping businesses like yours to develop a culture of world class continuous improvement, and the breakthrough KPI performance which it enables. Our support follows two parallel paths...



Performance through People

Your people are amazing – one of your biggest business assets. Some of the time...

Because no matter how talented, dedicated or experienced they are, every one of your people deals with stress and uncertainty every day: Competing priorities, difficult customers, tight deadlines...

They'll take most of those challenges in their stride. But the more they build up, the more they impact performance, which can easily snowball. So we embed the resilience, communication and influence skills to keep your people performing at their collective best, even under pressure.

Performance through Process

Process isn't usually a word to quicken the pulse with excitement. Yet there's a process for everything your business does, from welcoming new customers to creating your annual reports.

When they're working they get little attention, but when processes aren't at their best, the mistakes and work-arounds become a silent capacity thief – leaving less time for what everyone's really meant to be doing. And your KPIs get harder to maintain, let alone improve.

We're experts at getting operational teams delivering breakthrough process improvements, to enhance productivity, capacity and on-time delivery, reduce quality issues and complaints, and improve customer experience - leading to less stress, and a healthier bottom line.



Some of Our Key Numbers



People We've Trained

Over 1,000



Processes they've Improved

More than 5,000



Resulting annual value

Around £75million, and counting...

What We Do

3P Academy Transformational Programmes

There's nothing we love more than working with you to embed the shared skills, systems and language of performance throughout your business. This is typically a 12 month programme, and suits a six-plus-figure business employing 50 or more people.

Every programme's designed bespoke, tailored to your specific needs, and is delivered bite-sized to fit into busy schedules. Workshop sessions are hands-on, so participants apply their new skills to deliver improvements as they learn – projects typically deliver between £15K and £250K of business value within the first few months.

A Guided Project or Process Improvement

For smaller businesses or those who want to focus on a specific improvement, we facilitate strategic projects and deliver the first significant step-change within a selected process area. Using our unique blend of continuous improvement and the latest behavioural science, this can also include Lean Six Sigma Yellow or Green Belt certification for your improvement champions.

Masterclasses and Keynote Presentations – developing Resourceful Thinking

Our interactive sessions are designed to equip your people to perform at their best, even under pressure. There are 12 topics, which can be delivered stand-alone for a conference or away-day, or as a series, including How to Keep Stress Useful, How to Deal with Uncertainty and Change, Handling Difficult Conversations and Effective Decision-Making.

Described as 'a vitamin boost for the emotional immune system', the most common outcomes include improved sleep quality, resolving repetitive worrying, improved motivation and problem-solving, and reduced friction in important relationships.

Developing Your Leaders

These half-day interactive Masterclasses equip your leaders to navigate the complexity of competing priorities, internal politics and challenging personalities, putting them at the heart of your developing improvement culture. Topics include how to influence and lead change, communicate more effectively, and deliver exceptional performance (even when everyone's busy).

Coaching and Consultancy

We also work one-to-one with individuals, and with leadership and change teams for personally tailored skills development. Designed to help you cut through the complexity to fast-track your improvements, overcome the blind spots, and deliver performance improvements more swiftly and smoothly.

Introducing Sue Evans, 3P Academy Director



My whole career's been about creating effective, lasting change. I spent the first half of it embedding Continuous improvement within international organisations including Danone, Corning and Lloyds Banking Group. Highlights include two programmes which more than doubled site productivity, and delivering £1.9M waste reduction in under 5 months.

Hands-on experience at both ends of the World Class spectrum has given me a unique perspective for nurturing an improvement culture from any starting point.

Gaining my first Six Sigma Black Belt qualification over 25 years ago, I was part of a world-class business. Our strategy, systems and culture made breakthrough change straightforward. At the time I thought that was normal... On moving to my next role, I quickly discovered that it wasn't.

I moved to a business with no strategy, few systems, and none of the culture and infrastructure which I'd come to take for granted. So I set about creating it. I presented a no-spend, £1million saving initiative, only to be told "Don't worry about it". It was the first time I'd encountered a solid business case and plan getting no support. And it floored me.

But bit-by-bit, I found ways round the complacency and objections, engaging the operational teams to more than double productivity and halve process scrap, in less than 8 months. After delivering further £multi-million breakthroughs in a second from-scratch organisation, I established what's now evolved into the 3P Academy. Our programmes are carefully crafted from a signature blend of Continuous Improvement and Behavioural Science.

Across 10 years of delivering to around 25,000 people from hundreds of organisations, I've maintained an average feedback score of 9.2 out of 10. As well as supporting leadership teams to embed an improvement culture, I've mentored a diverse portfolio of projects, ranging from £15K to over £600K annual business value.

I'm a Master Practitioner and Trainer of NLP (neuro-linguistic programming), and an Approved Havening® Practitioner, trained in each by the original creators. I have a Diploma in CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy), a combined Diploma in Hypnotherapy, Coaching and NLP; and Institute of Leadership and Management certification as a Mentor and Coach. I'm also a Fellow of the Professional Speaking Association – one of less than 70 across the whole of the UK and Ireland.

It's my mission to get people fixing the problems which no one else has been brave enough to tackle. Because in many businesses, the answers to unlocking ground-breaking improvements are hiding right there, in plain sight. I believe in every individual's right to a challenging and fulfilling working life, and in every organisation's right to reap the rewards of building and supporting a capable and motivated workforce. That might sound idealistic, but the right know-how can make it your reality.