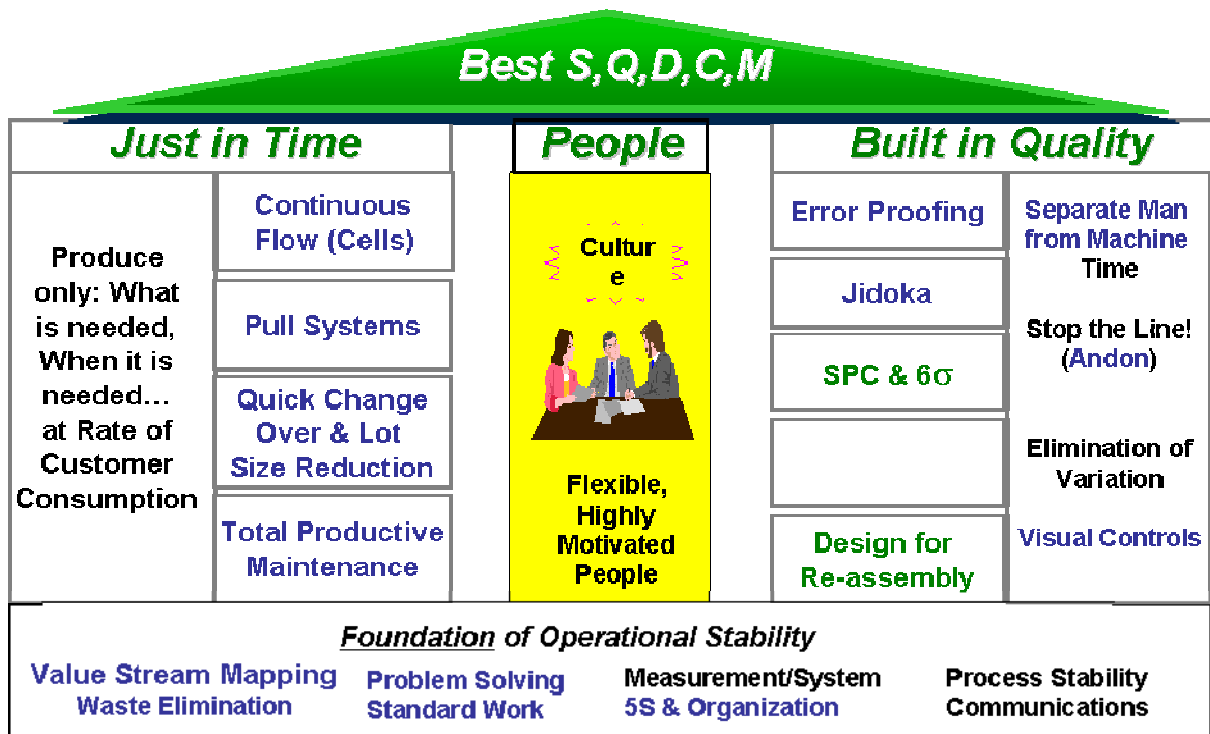


Giving Structure to Lean Learning

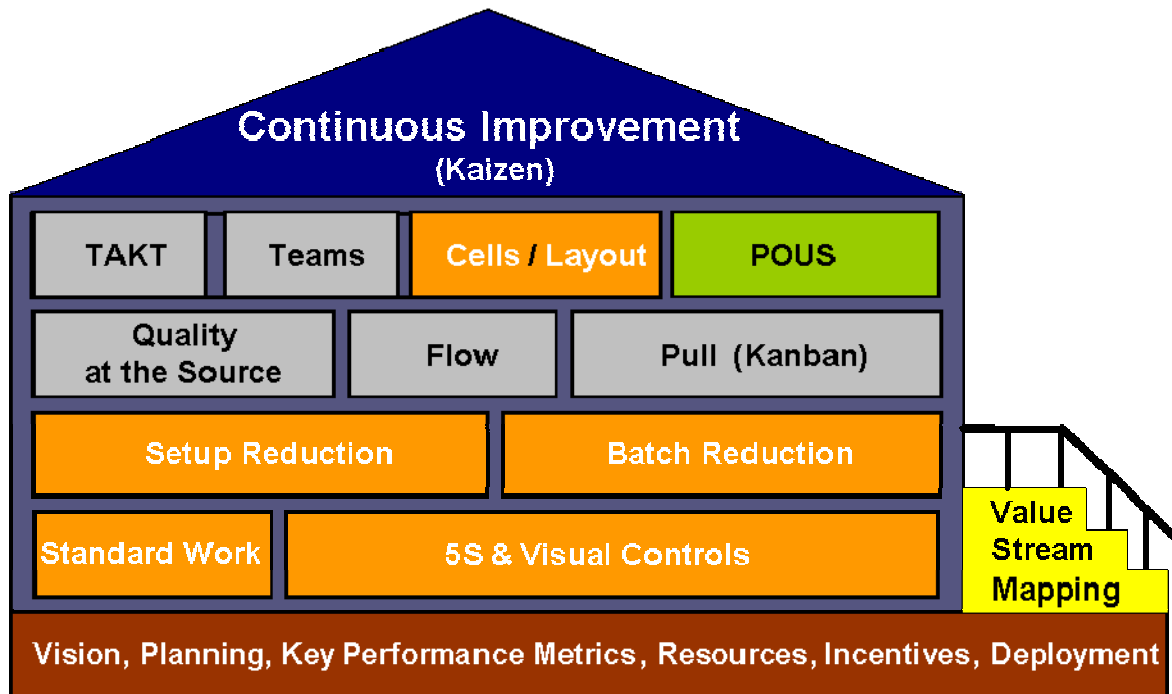
Have you ever wondered why it takes so long to become proficient in Lean? Many years ago, when I started learning Lean, everything was taught in bits and pieces and the pathway to higher learning didn't seem to have much structure. You would get only the information that you needed to know at the time of need. Even then a lot of the logic had to be deduced from what my Japanese Sensei said. There was no framework to give structure to the learning experience. Lean learning was and still is very hands on.

Slowly my perception of the structure of the systematic Lean approach began to take shape after years of learning the little bits and pieces. All the pieces began to fit into a structured approach. Many people would talk about learning the Lean Pillars to understand the interconnectivity of the Lean techniques. The Lean Pillars take on many looks or formats but all have the same concept. They are a collection of ideas that are always taught with a bottom up approach. Understand the foundation and then work you way up the pillars to achieve the best Cost, Quality, and Delivery. The problem always seemed to be that the general learning of the individual pieces was disconnected from the direct application of the information in the big picture.



Another aspect of the traditional approach follows one of the Toyota principles that Sensei Yamada taught me that states “*Any improvement must be made in accordance with the scientific method, under the guidance of a teacher, at the lowest possible level in the organization.*” The best teachers that I had would take me by the hand and lead me

out onto the production floor to work on a problem. This is a great way to learn how to apply a technique because it worked on a direct cause and effect relationship but still didn't show the big picture.

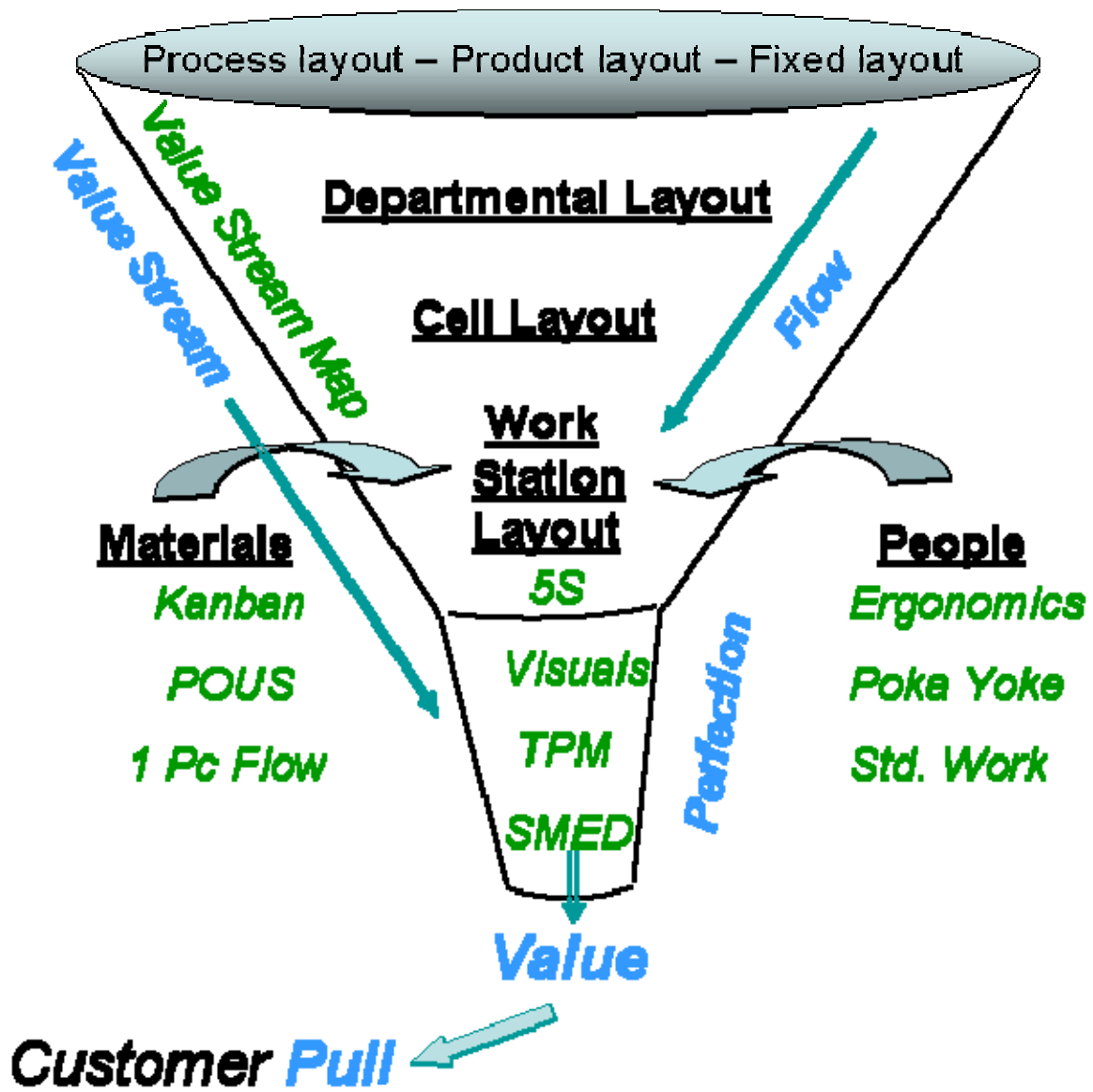


My most recent adventure in teaching Lean used the company's House of Lean approach. Once again the students were only seeing a collection of tools. You first establish the foundation principles, work with your Value Stream Map as the gateway into the house, and then work block by block on the rest of the knowledge segments. Nowhere did it speak to the Lean Vision or the five Lean Principles. Nowhere does it show the Lean facilitators in training where these tools fit into the overall process flow.

The two previous examples provide a reasonable roadmap when taken at a high level. What I needed, for my students wishing to become Lean facilitators, was a grass roots level map to show them where they were heading and how they fit into the process. They need to relate the subject matter to the world in which they live!

In preaching the principles of “Visual Management”, my own words came home to roost, “*make the process talk*”. In this case it is the teaching process that needs to talk differently to the students. The information needed to speak rather than be implied. The students need to have eyes wide open rather than wear blinders that focused them only on one small piece of the whole process. In this latest attempt, I have set the process hierarchy going from broad to narrow scope in **black**, the Lean Principles in **blue**, and the Lean techniques in **green**.

Plant Layout



All Lean processes are made up of four parts: **people** systems, **workspace** systems, **material** systems, and **quality** systems. When talking about the Lean maturation pathway that we all follow, these four are fairly easy to understand. One must first deal with people systems to set up the Lean culture. Then you will design the workspace to set the process in order and establish discipline. Next we develop the material aspects to improve flow and quality aspects to drive perfection. I believe that this illustration helps me to show their relationships to one another.

No visual aid is truly complete in and of itself. But I believe that this latest attempt at a visual aid moves a little closer to helping students understand the big picture when learning Lean. The challenge has been to show the facilitator/operator how they and the Lean techniques fit into the big picture.

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