



Is CI Part of Your Leadership Development?

When high potential leaders rotate through the CI team, over an 18-month to 2-year assignment, it can be a powerful way of developing future leaders in your organization, and for creating a deeply embedded culture of improvement.

Long-term successful companies don't get that way without assigning responsibility and demanding accountability. That's why having a dedicated continuous improvement (CI) team, or kaizen promotion office, is essential for implementing process changes, for sustaining those changes, and for maintaining forward momentum. But what many senior executives don't consider, when they're setting up their CI team, is how powerful a tool it can be for leadership development in their organization, and for creating a deeply embedded culture of improvement.

Based on what I've seen working with many companies over the years, the CI role works best when it's a developmental role. High potential managers cycle through the position for a limited time, maybe 18 months to two years. They learn how to be good facilitators and good communicators. They learn how to do all of the follow-up

work that's necessary to make sure things get done.

They also become skilled at the daily management and coaching practices, which they then take to their next leadership position. The model that doesn't work as well is creating a CI team where the team members don't change for five to 10 years. That approach doesn't spread the knowledge of the tools or the leadership and coaching experience. Driving a LeanSigma transformation takes leadership. Everyone knows that. But one strong leader can't be the only person who is willing to make change happen. When the lean "zealot" moves on everything falls apart, because no one understands the tools and system in any depth.

Ongoing progress requires a team of individuals—on the CI team and dispersed throughout the organization—who really understand how the lean tools fit and work, as well as the management system, to successfully drive improvements year after year after year. Continuous improvement experience—both leading and implementing—are critical experiences in the leadership development funnel. What's your leadership development formula? Maybe it's time to rethink your leadership development program and make certain that continuous improvement is a mandatory rotation for your high potential leaders.



Bob Dean, Co-Founder, Board Member, & TBM Alumnus

Bob Dean co-founded TBM Consulting Group 25 years ago. He recently retired from day-to-day consulting but he continues to serve on the TBM Consulting Group Board of Directors