

The Thought Map

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Abstract

Statistical techniques such as Design of Experiments (DOE) and Statistical Process Control (SPC), as well as many non-statistical quality tools, are instrumental in improving many processes and products. A potential weakness in the use of these methodologies is that they are often placed within an artificial framework or roadmap commonly referred to as a “model for continuous process improvement”. These roadmaps are most often defined as sequential paths of activities and decisions required to achieve improvements in process outcomes or parameters. The sequential nature of the defined improvement path provides limitations in thoughts and work. Many questions, thoughts, and ideas are generated in a random or sporadic fashion. The tendency is to structure these thoughts in a sequential framework. However, the very essence of parallel thinking and learning is a critical asset in identifying the key areas associated with the necessary work to improve process or product. The thought map is invaluable in any focused work effort in order to capture the multitude of questions that arise, the many possible paths that need to be considered in obtaining solutions, the work performed, and the solutions obtained.