

CREATING A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CULTURE IN YOUR BUSINESS

Written by Gary Cox and Troy Lenihan

Over the past several years, businesses have focused on driving efficiency and improving operations. To support businesses in the Annapolis Valley, the Valley Regional Enterprise Network (VREN) has recently launched a program with support from Nova Scotia's Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive (WIPSI) program and Atlantic Canada Opportunity Agency (ACOA).

VREN, one of seven Regional Enterprise Networks in Nova Scotia, is supported by the towns of Kentville, Berwick and Middleton, West Hants Regional Municipality, the Municipality of the County of Kings and Glooscap First Nations. The organization aims to provide business, workforce, sector and regional development support to businesses that make the Annapolis Valley their home.

The two-year Continuous Improvement Program consists of five tiers of support designed to drive continuous improvement in processes that will positively impact the business's bottom line. The first three tiers of support can immediately improve the participant's bottom line only by investing time to participate.

THE MULTI-OFFERING APPROACH OF SUPPORT FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Continuous Improvement (CI) Awareness Sessions

Introduction to continuous improvement (CI) concepts, facilitated by efficiency experts from [Barrington Consulting Group](#), began in April with three additional sessions planned. This team has a variety of industry experiences, recently working with Eden Valley Poultry in Berwick.

In these CI Awareness sessions, participants are exposed to easy-to-implement practices that will immediately improve their operational efficiency. Participants explore how they may have wasted time, energy, and money in everyday activities in a hands-on simulation. Participants learn how to identify areas of opportunity to reduce cost and eliminate what's not adding value to your product or service. Visual management can help with training new employees. It can be made more accessible by applying standard work, thus ensuring the consistent quality of the work they perform and their safety.

Connection Tours

Connection tours of local businesses and processing facilities will run quarterly for two years. These tours allow participants to learn what others are doing and use the tools and methodologies taught during the CI awareness sessions and show their own best practices.

Peer Learning (Hands-on Case Study)

The CI program allows participants to take part in a small, 2-day knowledge-sharing real-time in-business workshop to develop further understanding, application, and implementation of improvements to their processes. The workshop provides an

opportunity to learn, contribute and take away ideas on making your operations more efficient.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN A PEER-LEARNING EVENT

Eden Valley Poultry Director of Operations and Continuous Improvement participated in a previous peer-learning event. He joined a team of experts and business leaders at the Michelin location in Waterville. The goal was to support another local company, Just Us Coffee Roasters Co-op, to address and solve a business problem.

Attendees broke into small groups to look at the mapped-out processes to determine opportunities to improve the cycle-time and accuracy associated with the tasks and their objectives. The solutions were then put forward to the Just Us management team for implementation.

"It was very exciting to collaborate with other manufacturers from our Valley community. The level of engagement from all the participants was outstanding. I foresee positive results coming from this workshop."

- Charles Travis, Production Supervisor, Just Us Coffee Roasters Co-op

In-Depth Coaching and Site Specific Learning

VREN will look for continuous improvement projects in various industries to ensure shared best practice learning that will benefit a broad range of products and services.

The VREN will select five Annapolis Valley companies to receive in-depth, intensive support through training, capacity building and mentoring from an experienced continuous improvement expert.

The cost of this improvement project will be co-shared between VREN and the receiver of the support, thanks to ACOA funding. Businesses will be providing the smaller portion of the cost-sharing. Applications to receive this support will be accepted starting July 1st, and supported CI projects can run through to January 2023.

Implementation Coaching – Project Specific Learning

The other level of support will come as a combination of on and off-site coaching for six companies. The specific support will depend on the organization's needs needing continuous improvement support.

To find out more about the CI Programs, application process, and support available to you, contact Richelle Brown Redden at rbrownredden@valleyren.ca.

Gary Cox is a process efficiency expert, a Lean Six Sigma (LSS) Master Black Belt with Barrington Consulting, and a Senior Associate and co-lead of Barrington OPS (Operational Performance Service).

Gary brings more than 18 years of project execution experience to the team and received his Master Black Belt training in 2010. Gary uses his LSS skills to develop and support strategies for implementing LSS methodologies to enhance the evolution of a company to attain a continuous improvement culture. Cumulatively, Gary has executed and overseen process improvement projects that have achieved over \$25 million in savings. He has led and coached Lean Six Sigma projects within various industries.

In addition to his support of Maplewood Farms, Gary led the training and coaching for frontline supervisors and managers with visual management huddle boards and real-time in-process performance and quality indicators throughout the most recent engagement with Eden Valley Poultry plant operations. His support for Eden Valley Poultry is ongoing.

Troy Lenihan is the Director of Continuous Improvement & Operations at Eden Valley Poultry in Berwick, NS. Troy has been with Eden Valley since operations began in October 2012. He grew up in the Valley and now lives in Glenmont with his wife, Amanda, and their two boys.

Troy started his journey in the poultry business at the age of 21 with the Eastern Protein Foods sanitation team and has been in the industry for 20 years. The various roles and challenges with Eastern Protein, ACA and currently with Eden Valley Poultry have provided great learnings to Troy to support his current role.

Troy received his Lean Six Sigma black belt and is a graduate of the Queens Executive Program. He is passionate about putting his Lean Sigma learnings into practice to solve challenges within the company and in everyday life. Troy is also involved in the Nova Scotia soccer community as a coach for the past 11 years and now as the current President of Valley United Soccer Club. He enjoys hiking waterfalls with his family as well as mountain biking.