

Find the Constraint

Observe one ordinary period. Record evidence before proposing a solution. A constraint is the step or resource that limits how fast the whole system can produce a useful result.

1. DEFINE THE FLOW

What useful result are you following? Where does this work enter, and when is it complete for the customer?

2. RECORD THE EVIDENCE

Where does work wait or pile up? What repeatedly gets interrupted, restarted, corrected, or expedited?

3. IDENTIFY THE DEPENDENCY

Which person, resource, decision, or piece of information must act before work can continue?

4. TEST THE CONSTRAINT

If demand increased 20% tomorrow, what would fail first? If this resource gained one hour, would the whole system complete more useful work?

5. SEPARATE SYMPTOM FROM CONSTRAINT

Visible symptom: _____ Likely constraint: _____

6. DESIGN A SMALL EXPERIMENT

What reversible change will you test? What do you predict will happen?

7. CHOOSE THE MEASURE

Before: starts ___ completions ___ unfinished ___ waits ___ priority changes ___ After: starts ___ completions ___ unfinished ___ waits ___ priority changes ___

Do not ask whether everyone stayed busy. Ask whether the system completed more useful work with less waiting.