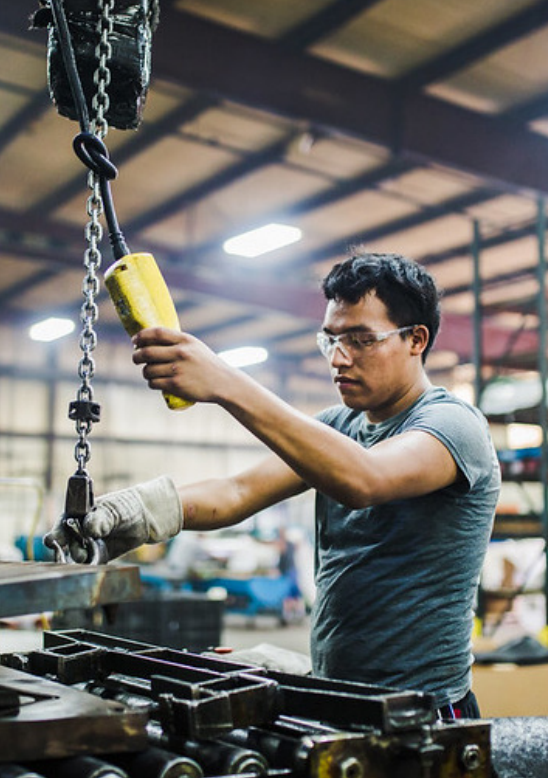

A3 Structured Problem Solving

According to the Quality 2020 report issued by AIAG in collaboration with Deloitte, "OEMs and suppliers say problem solving is important because it impacts the organization's ability to manage, monitor, and respond to quality-related events; their ability to implement operational efficiencies; and brand and customer relationships."

Additionally, 95% of survey respondents "believe closing the gap in problem solving would have a moderate to extremely high impact on quality."

Is your organization equipped in and capable of effective problem solving? If you are "problem solving" the same problems repeatedly – your answer is No! A structured approach to tackling a big problem allows managers and team members to avoid the "just make it go away" tendency, which we know is unlikely to really bring about a solution.

The A3 Process helps people engage in collaborative, in-depth problem-solving. It drives problem-solvers to address the root causes of problems which surface in day to day work routines. The A3 Process can be used for almost any situation, and research has found that, when used properly (i.e., all the steps are followed and completed), the chances of success improve dramatically.

Did You Know?

The term "A3" is derived from the particular size of paper used to outline ideas, plans, and goals throughout the A3 process. (A3 paper is also known as 11" x 17" or B-sized paper). The A3 report is a storyboard that follows the Plan – Do – Check – Act cycle.

A3 Problem Solving Follows the Below Steps:

Describe the problem and background

A clear, focused, stand-alone statement that defines the problem. Details that cannot be described in the Current Condition drawing and useful baseline metrics may be included in this section.

Describe the current condition

A drawing that conveys a complete understanding of the current situation is essential in order to realize what improvements may be necessary.

Describe the target condition

A drawing that conveys a complete understanding of what the situation will look like once the improvements have taken hold. The target condition describes what is necessary to meet the goal.

Identify the root cause(s)

The Root Cause Analysis section can accommodate either a Five Whys analysis or a Ishikawa (fishbone) diagram.

Develop countermeasures and action plan

A listing of specific tasks that will lead to improvements, along with timelines, ownership and the expected outcomes.

Review and evaluate

How will you measure success?

Follow up Actions

What still needs to be done and who will do it?