

What is A3 Problem Solving and Reporting?

“The process by which an organization identifies, frames, and then acts on problems and challenges at all levels... A3 works as both a problem-solving tool and as a structured process for creating problem-solvers... The intent is to embed organizational habits, practices, and mind-sets that enable, encourage, and teach people to think and to take initiative... It is a foundational management process that enables and encourages learning through the scientific method... a standardized form of currency for problem-solving, dialogue, and decision-making in your organization — creating an organization of scientists who continually improve operations and results through constant learning from the work at hand.” (John Shook, 2008: Managing to Learn)

Purposes of the A3 Process:

- Based on and reinforces the Deming Plan, Do, Check, Act cycle
- Communicate a problem solving proposal or concept in a succinct format on 1 sheet of A3 paper (11” x 17” in the USA) rather than a longer report that no one has time to read.

“I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead.” (Mark Twain)

- Crystalize and condense the A3 authors’ thinking to one page.
- Succinct, simple and visual format that is easily followed and understood.
- Create a common organizational framework and language for problem solving and documenting lessons learned to share with the whole organization through storytelling and the PDCA cycle.
- Reporting project status, problem solving, proposing policy changes and for implementing continuous improvement.

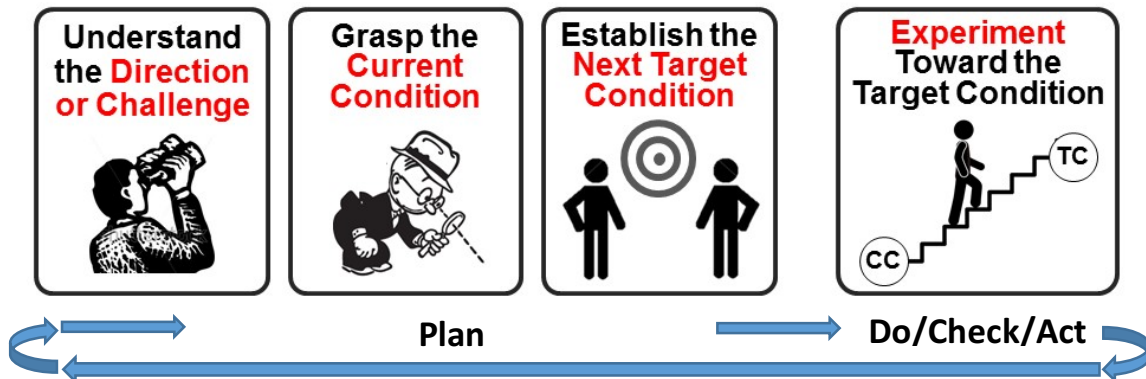
A3 FORMAT

- Methodical way to identify a problem and establish the root cause.
- Develop the capability of people at all levels in an organization by improving people’s critical thinking and problem solving skills. Use 5W + 1H with questions such as:
 - **W**hat is the problem?
What is the background? What needs to be done?
 - **W**here is the problem happening?
 - **W**ho is the problem affecting? Who is responsible?
 - **W**hen is it happening? When to do it? When will it be checked?
 - **W**hy choose this problem? Why is it happening? 5 why to find the root cause.
 - **H**ow often is it happening? How can it be prevented? How can it be measured?

P L A N	1. Background/Problem Identification: What are you talking about and why?	D O	6. Implementation: How will you make the plan work?
	2. Current Conditions: Where do things stand now?	C H E C K &	7. Follow up: What measures are in place to check if the plan is working? How will you monitor and visually display the implementation?
	3. Goal/Target: What specific outcome is required?		
	4. Root Cause Analysis: Why does the problem or need exist?		
	5. Countermeasures (Recommendations): What do you propose and why?	A C T	What challenges might be expected and how will the team respond?

Steps in the A3 process:

- Understand the background and how the bigger picture of the problem relates to your organization (grasp the situation and current condition). “Go and see for yourself.”
- Define the logic and rationale behind the problem statement and the extent of the problem.
- Clearly identify, define, investigate, illustrate and document the type of problem and the impact (safety/quality/morale/cost/time) it is having on the process, person, product or partners.
- Deeply collaborate and systematically think and problem solve to facilitate process improvements and implement efficient business practices through effective story telling.
- Help build consensus on how to tackle specific problems and align a team’s strategy by involving those closest to the problem in the development of problem statements, countermeasures and possible solutions.
- A clearly defined problem statement increases the likely success of countermeasures.
- Develop countermeasures and clear goals to measure the effectiveness of the solution.
- Assign responsibility for countermeasures (who will do what, where, when and how often?).



(Source: Mike Rother www.katatogrow.com)

- Experiment towards the next Target Condition – step by step towards the main goal and vision.
- Stabilize and standardize the process when you reach the new Target Condition and start PDCA cycle again.
 - [A Microsoft Word template for A3 Problem Solving can be downloaded here.](#)

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