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# Continuous Improvement Process in a Service Organization

Case: Prohoc Group

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**TIIVISTELMÄ:**

Tämä tutkimus on toteutettu toimeksiantona Prohoc Oy :lle. Tavoitteena on uudelleenkuvata aloitetoiminnan prosessi, johon sisältyy prosessia tukevan työkalun valitseminen. Yrityksen nykyinen aloitetoiminta on tuottanut hyvin vähän aloitteita työntekijöiltä viime vuosina, ja yrityksen johto on sitoutunut kehittämään yrityksen aloitetoimintaa toiveenaan edistää koko yrityksen kattavaa innovaatiokulttuuria, jossa työntekijä kokee olevansa kehittämisen keskiössä ja saavansa tarvittavan tuen siihen.

Tutkimusprojekti noudattaa yksinkertaista stage-gate- mallinnusta, johon on kirjattu kehitysprojektin eri vaiheet ja tuotokset portteineen. Yrityksen ala sekä organisaatiorakenne antavat taustatietoa tutkimuksen tueksi. Strategiset tavoitteet on arvioitu ja yhdistetty jatkuvan parantamisen malliin siten, että ne tukevat aloitetoimintaa oikealla tavalla ja niitä edistävien kehitysideoiden määrä kasvaa.

Teoria antaa pohjan tutkimuksen suunnitelmaa varten, ja siinä yhdistyvät jatkuvan parantamisen keskeiset periaatteet sekä onnistumistekijät aloitetoiminnan elementtien rakentamista varten. Näitä keskeisiä elementtejä ovat esimerkiksi aloitetoiminnan vahva viestiminen organisaatiolle, johdon sitoutuminen sekä yhtiön tavoitteiden linjaaminen innovaatiotoiminnan kanssa.

Tämän tutkimustyön päätuotokset ovat uuden prosessikuvauksen esittely sekä prosessia tukevan uuden työkalun valintaprosessi sekä käyttöönotto. Muita tuotoksia ovat aloitetoimintaa edistävä viestintäsuunnitelma, palkitsemismalli sekä koulutusmateriaalit. Aloitetoiminnan mittaaminen on myös tärkeä osa tätä tutkimustyötä ja keskeiset innovaatiojohtamiseen keskittyvät mittarit on tutkimuksessa lueteltu.

**KEYWORDS:** Kaizen, Continuous Improvement, Innovation Management, Process Mapping, Action Research

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**ABSTRACT:**

This thesis is done for case company Prohoc Oy. The objective is to redefine the process description for continuous improvement model in the company including the selection of an idea collection tool. The company has in recent years gathered very few initiatives from employees and wants to develop an innovation culture where employees feel empowered to share their development ideas.

The project follows a stage gate-process where all elements are documented. As background the case company's industry and organizational structure are presented. The strategic objectives of the case company are reviewed and linked to the project in a way which will steer the idea collection towards bringing desired benefits.

Literature review provides basis for scoping and planning continuous improvement in the case company. The takeaways from the literature review are the key principles that continuous improvement includes as well as success factors for managing continuous improvement and innovation in an organization. These are for example strong communication of CI-activities, management commitment and linking company strategic goals with CI agenda.

The deliverables of this action research are to present a renewed process map and an idea collection tool that meet the specifications defined within the case company. Other deliverables are internal communication plan for promotion purposes, and a plan for rewarding ideas in the case company. Suggestions for benchmarks and the level of innovation management to which this type of company in question should aim for, is given as well as a plan and KPI's to measure the process.

**KEYWORDS:** Kaizen, Continuous Improvement, Innovation Management, Process Mapping, Action Research

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## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CI | Continuous Improvement |
| PDCA | Plan-do-check-act cycle |
| TQC | Total Quality Control |
| TQM | Total Quality Management |
| TPM | Total productive Maintenance |
| JIT | Just in Time |
| HSE | Health and Safety |
| KPI | Key Process Indicator |
| ISM | Interpretive Structural modelling |
| NPS | Net Promoter Score |
| eNPS | Employee Net Promoter Score |

# 1 Introduction

Engaging employees from all levels of the organization in developing different areas of the business can give competitive advantage for a company and is in fact crucial to the survival of an organization in the modern business culture that is subject to rapid change. Many systematic approaches have been developed within manufacturing that also service businesses have taken into use. This thesis focuses on modelling and implementing a continuous improvement/ idea collecting process in a service company operating in industrial project business. The aim is to document the project in a case company so that all steps are explained, and it can easily be duplicated in another company or alike.

## 1.1 Aim of the thesis

The key objectives of this thesis are to update and launch a new kaizen idea collecting process and a tool that steer employees towards developing ideas that support the strategic goals of the company, and to map out the elements that the company sees as success factors in engaging employees to share their development ideas. The ultimate objective is to promote an innovation culture in the case company that will continuously improve processes as well as create added value to customers as well as the employees. To reach these objectives the current situation is addressed, including the existing tool and process. The needs and specifications of the new kaizen tool and process have been discussed with the management team of the case company in a series of meetings. The theory gives a valuable framework by mapping out the steps needed to build and maintain a successful innovation culture and mindset that the entire organisation shares and gives.

During the management meetings updated overall company strategy and company's HSE and ISO policies have been discussed, to which continuous improvement is strongly linked. Background theory on continuous improvement success factors and best practices are gathered from different sources including academic articles, publications, books labout continuous improvement methods including Kaizen, as well as company material.

The empirical chapter will describe the process of building a new continuous improvement system and a Kaizen tool in the case company based on a combination of the theory and management input.

## 1.2 Research problem and perspective

The research problem was initially given by the management of a company where the author is employed. The company has recently updated their ISO 9001 quality standard as well as renewed the overall company strategy and the management had realized that continuous improvement is heavily linked to these activities. The company has had a kaizen tool including a rewarding system, but it has ended up outdated and forgotten. The management wishes to create an innovation culture where ideas and experience could be shared among the experts, which would give the company added value that would also extend to added value for the customers. The aim is to build a process that engages company experts to share their development ideas, that functions on all departments and levels in the organization, and one that can be documented and maintained.

The research method can be described as action research as the writer is actively involved in the development activities as an employee and part of the company's management team. The continuous improvement process and Kaizen tool are renewed from start to finish and the process is described in the research chapter of this thesis. The area in which this study is conducted is continuous improvement and innovation management.

## 1.3 Case company

This research is conducted for a private owned company providing project management, control, information, and construction management services for industrial projects globally. In addition, the company has widened its portfolio to offering also blue-collar expertise and has in 2021 three daughter companies working within marking products,

assembly work and maintenance services. The services are developed in close co-operation with strategic partners. Prohoc operates mainly within energy-, mining-, cargo-, oil & gas- and process industry projects. In addition, domestic nuclear projects and renewable energy projects are potential future sites.

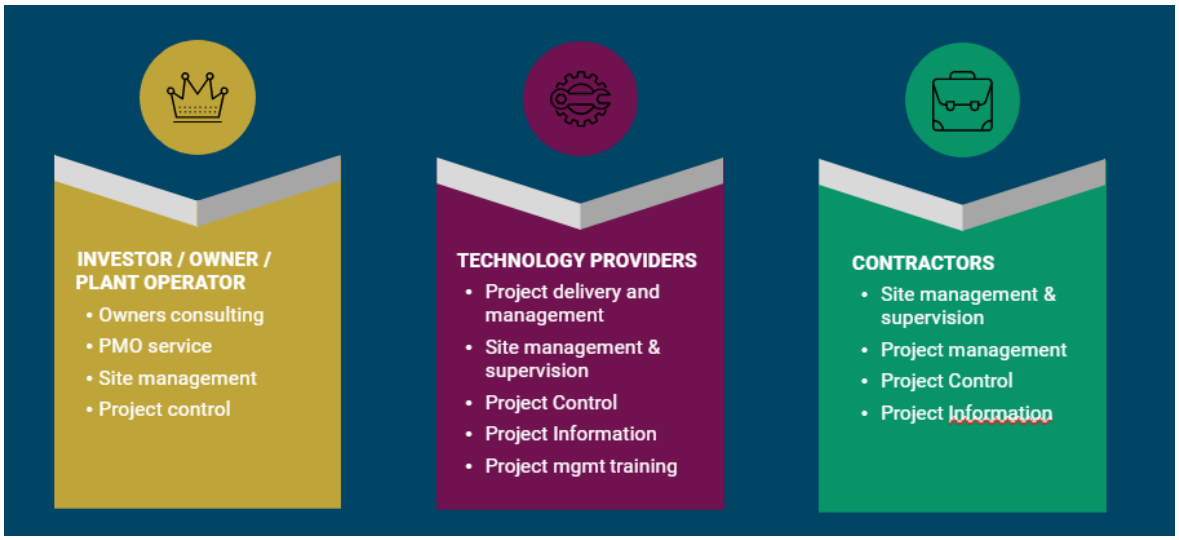



Figure 1 Prohoc's services for different stakeholders (company general presentation 2021)


Figure 2 Prohoc Group (company general presentation 2021)

The company headquarters are in Vaasa, Ostrobothnia and has been operating for over 25 years. Prohoc Group has currently (2021) a little over 200 employees, out of which

approximately 60% are deployed in customer projects as project management experts and consultants all around the world, around 25% in blue collar services and rest are working within management and administration. Prohoc Group consists of six different subsidiaries: Prohoc Projects Oy, Prohoc Services Oy, Value Control Oy, Prohoc Proactor Oy, Recomill and Tähtipiste Oy. (Prohoc general presentation, 2021 [Restricted access]).

The company's vision is to be the most trusted and wanted project partner. Company mission includes enabling employees and customers to succeed in the world of projects. Through their employee value proposition, the company wants to distinguish itself as the "best home" for experts and enable them to shine in the world of projects. By putting the employees first, the company trusts that they are able to attract the best experts in a competitive field. By being a relatively small and agile service provider, whilst large enough and versatile problem solver, the company ensures the continuance of long-term customer relationships and builds new sustainable partnerships. Prohoc's strategic goals are explained in detail in the results chapter. It is essential that the new continuous improvement process supports the strategic goals of the company.

## 1.4 Current continuous improvement practices in case company

Kaizen has been a continuous improvement method in the case company for some years. The process has been simple; a physical idea collection box located in the office kitchen as well as electronically in the company intranet. A rewarding system has been communicated with the employees during launch, including rewarding the best idea of the month with a small gift voucher and a possibility to be rewarded for ideas that results in financial savings.

The number of ideas received has been non-existent, only a few development ideas in recent years. One reason to this is that there is currently no assigned person to co-ordinate and communicate the existence of the kaizen tool. Also, there is currently no process description for continuous improvement and kaizen activities in the company and

the handling and implementing of new ideas has stopped almost completely. The idea collection tool is in the company's intranet, via Surveypal platform. The design is basic with only a few steps; choosing either "development idea" or "new idea", name, date, and a free text box to write down the idea. There is also possibility to upload a picture or a file. Information about the method, aim and rewards is, in brief words, included in the questionnaire. There is no control register or follow-up.

Furthermore, in recent times there have not been efforts to promote the CI model or active encouragement for coming up with new ideas. Management has stated that there is a need to support innovation more to grow and stay competitive, and there are improvement steps made here and there. The issue, however, culminates in a lack of ownership of the process and systematic following through of initiatives, as well as active promotion and encouragement from upper management.

## 1.5 Outline of the thesis

This research is divided in two main parts; theory chapter and the empirical research that in this thesis will be a description on the development of continuous improvement process and tool in a case company. An introduction describing the need for this type of project as well as background information on the case company and current status of the existing kaizen tool is included in the beginning of the thesis. Limitations i.e., what areas will not be included in the research are also discussed in the introduction. The final chapters of the thesis will summarize the project and key findings as well as restrictions are analysed. Suggestions for further research are also given.

The theory chapter supports the planning and building a new CI process and kaizen tool. Principles and history of CI and kaizen are described through academic books and articles. The classical implementation scenarios within manufacturing and service business are discussed. To give a framework for benchmarking, examples of the most innovative

companies are introduced, on a global scale as well as domestic companies operating in similar environments as the case company.

The theory will also list out what are the most important factors contributing to successful continuous improvement strategies and, on the other hand, what are the most common pitfalls. The most significant success factors include good communication within the company about the importance of CI and how the process is constructed, management commitment, employee engagement and rewarding, transparency, a structured process, and well-defined roles. Employee engagement is a modern trend that has been studied a lot in recent years. Whilst traditionally simple monetary rewards have been the most significant motivator, in today's business world employees are motivated by not only monetary compensation but also a sense of involvement and being able to develop their own work.

The empirical chapter describes the process of building a new continuous improvement process map and a kaizen idea collecting tool. The success factors listed in the theory chapter are functioning as basis for the structure. During a set of meetings with the case company management, basic principles and tool specifications have been discussed. The company is in the middle of updating its company strategy and quality system. Continuous improvement process and idea collection tool is an integrated part of the big picture and therefore it is important to define most important strategic goals and link the idea collection process to them so that employees are easily steered towards giving development ideas that support those goals.

The company's key development areas are divided into categories by department. The biggest department both in sales terms and in number of employees is the site workers who are located around the world. Other departments are employees working within administration, and production departments producing ID plates and printing solutions. Development areas within departments have been discussed with respective managers. By defining targets, it is easier to steer the development idea generation and

maintenance. In addition, there is need for choosing the right kind of metrics to be able to measure progress and benefits that come from constant improvement. Due to multi-disciplinary nature of the different departments the metrics are different from one another. Metrics for each category will be chosen based on the findings in the theory chapter.

The empirical research will also include defining the roles and responsibilities for CI and idea collection process. To be able to maintain and analyse results in a statistical way, it is necessary for example to appoint a co-ordinator whose responsibility will be to communicate, maintain an idea register and follow up on statuses of implemented ideas. Other responsible persons are also appointed during management meetings.

Finally, tool specifications are discussed with management team including experts from different parts in the organization to find out needs of different employees regarding the usage of the tool. For instance, what encourages a site worker working long hours in Siberia or Saudi Arabia to share their ideas? Also, it is important to for example design the tool so that the ideas can be categorised. Another factor is the means of how the ideas are assessed and rewarded.

## 1.6 Scope and limitations

This thesis focuses on the idea collecting process description and tool however it is a part of a larger process map that includes aspects that are all connected to each other and share the same principles. All these areas are equally important to develop and maintain. Many of the areas concerning continuous improvement do hence have the same basic principles, such as management commitment and rewarding systems, but they will be developed separately from this thesis.

From a stage-gate perspective this project is narrowed down to scoping, building the CI process and tool, and development, up until the point of launch. In the scoping stage the

needs of the company are addressed to begin building a CI process and tool that best serves the company throughout departments. Specifications and system requirements, i.e., how to make a tool that is easy to access and use regardless of the working environment, are listed. The building and development stages include activities such as defining basic principles, building a process description, defining roles and responsibilities for maintaining the system, and setting up targets.

Designing the tool is an important part of the development process as the usability plays a significant part in a company where the employees are working in various conditions and environments. Piloting phase is included in this thesis, and it introduces the pilot/ test group and objectives of the pilot. Short analysis on the pilot as well as next development steps that will be done in operational phase are explained. The operational phase is excluded from the thesis, apart from a brief introduction that summarises the following steps and concludes the project.

Some limitations in this thesis that will not be discussed are areas that are related to continuous improvement, but the feedback channels are different, and the feedback is processed separately. These areas include safety alert- and accident reports from employees, employee wellbeing surveys and external healthcare surveys, as well as customer feedback. Reports of all these areas have the same purpose; to improve processes and wellbeing of the workforce. Other limitations are related to engagement mechanisms and procedures that are currently under development. One system that is yet to be reviewed and renewed is the rewarding system in the company. This rewarding system covers also other employee inputs such as recommendations on new employees or sales leads. Due to the company rewarding system being under development, rewarding mechanisms will be only discussed briefly from the CI point of view.

# 2 Literature Review

This chapter intends to give an understanding of what is meant with continuous improvement in organisations and the importance of continuously improving various company activities in terms of added value and being able to compete in the market. Secondly, different success factors within continuous improvement are discussed as well as key motivators that steer employees from all levels of the organisation to contribute to the innovation culture. The literature review gives a framework for planning the idea collection process in a proper manner in the case company, but it also helps to understand the philosophy that is continuous improvement, as it is a holistic way of empowering employees as well as gaining benefits in business.

## 2.1 What is continuous improvement?

Continuous improvement is a philosophy that focuses on improving products, services, and processes continuously on an incremental level. There are many continuous improvement methods and theories that have been developed over the years to help systematize and measure processes. Such methods include for example lean, six sigma and plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle. Many good definitions and motivations for continuous improvement have been documented over the decades. This chapter gives a few to give an understanding of the philosophy.

Improvement as a concept and way of thinking comes naturally to many in today's business environment. Bjorn Andersen (2007, p. 1-4) states in his book "Business process Improvement Toolbox" that improvement is necessary for every organization, regardless of the field in which an organization operates in, for a few reasons: The performance level of different processes is likely to decrease after some time unless it is somehow actively maintained. If a company does not make any effort towards improving its processes, it will lose competitiveness, as competitors are still highly likely to improve. Also new competitors are entering the market, and today's customers are getting more

demanding with higher expectations. If expectations regarding for example quality are not met, the company is guaranteed to lose sales and customers. Hence it is irrelevant to contemplate on whether or not to improve, rather a company should ask themselves how much to improve and how quickly is it possible to do it.

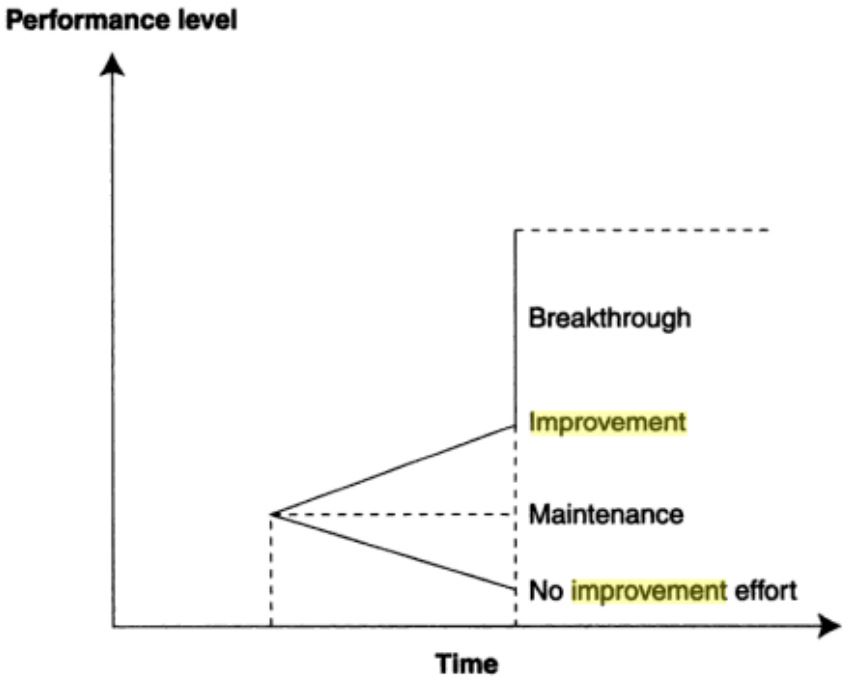



Figure 3. Without maintenance and improvement, the performance level decreases. (Andersen.2007)

According to Laureau (2010, p. 14-15) there are 3 ways to improve processes; Innovation, continuous improvement and changing processes. The first one is to outsource the process and hope that the supplier is more specialized in the field and does it better. This method is not kaizen, but it can lead to significant benefits. The second way is by radical improvement, which can mean a completely different process that leads to great improvement in quality, costs, customer satisfaction etc. This type of improvement is usually called innovation. An example of innovation is new technologies. The third way to change processes is to get a continuous stream of incremental improvements. Laureau points out that an improvement does not have to be big, but when many small improvements are put together, they can improve the overall performance significantly. (Laureau,

2010, pages 14-15) Jagdeep Singh breaks improvement into two focus types, gradual development, and innovation, which can be compared into a ramp and a step, respectively. Management has two key functions that are innovation and maintenance. (Singh, 2018). The relation between these is demonstrated in Figure 4.

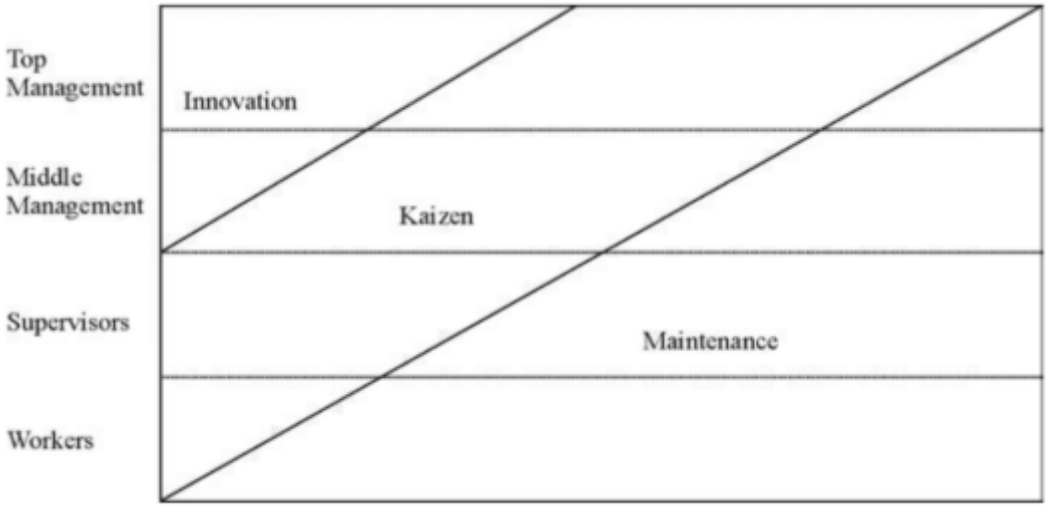



Figure 4 Improvement broken down into gradual improvement and innovation (Singh 2018).

Laureau (2010) explains that there is one challenge with producing minor improvements and it is that to be able to get new improvements perpetually there must be a system in place which helps generate ideas as well as supports and sustains the improvements. As small improvements are made to ways of working, employees need to be involved. To be able to engage employees to continuously improve their work, supervisors need to provide support and the upper management's responsibility is to provide the supervisors with training, support, and resources to create and maintain an environment that engages employees to participate.

Kaizen is another word for continuous improvement, and it is a lean philosophy method that is used for improving different kinds of processes amongst the management and employees in an organisation. Kaizen is a system that encourages all employees to give incremental development suggestions and changes which results in the company

constantly improving. The word Kaizen is Japanese, and it translates to continuous improvement with small steps. The basic principle is to improve processes by minimizing waste little by little and changing current ways of working with small steps and with little or no monetary investments and risks. Javier Santos et al state in their book Improving Production with Lean Thinking that continuous improvement is based on employees' suggestions, and it was developed in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. However, some of the most important improvements happened when this thinking arrived in Japan, and it was merged with the Japanese tools such as quality circles. The Japanese combined these two methods and thus Kaizen was born. (Santos et al. 2006.)

Although Kaizen was developed based on the needs of manufacturing companies, other types of companies have recognized the benefits of the system. More and more service-oriented companies have started to use kaizen as a way of improving processes as well as developing the company's activities across organization. As the basic theory behind Kaizen is that incremental changes can result in great changes in business processes, with Kaizen it is possible to create an innovative environment where all employees are constantly seeking possibilities to improve.

Masaaki Imai explains in their book "Gemba Kaizen: A commonsense approach to a Continuous Improvement Strategy" that Kaizen includes several key Kaizen Systems, which can all be included to achieve a holistic kaizen approach and strategy in an organisation. These systems include:

- TQC (Total Quality Control) or TQM (Total Quality Management)
- JIT – A Just in Time production system (or so-called Toyota Production System)
- TPM (Total Productive Maintenance)
- Policy Deployment
- A suggestion System
- Activities in small group

Total quality management means essentially that a quality mentality involves every employee in the organisation from top to bottom, further reaching external stakeholders such as suppliers. Just in time- production system aims at reducing an avoiding all types of waste in processes. Total productive maintenance focuses on improving and maintaining equipment quality through methods such as preventive maintenance. Policy deployment entails that leadership should offer targets for improvement efforts. The suggestion system (which is essentially what this thesis focuses on) is based on the idea that having engaged employees is beneficial for the company and they are encouraged to share their ideas regardless how small they are. The last system mentioned is a method where employees execute projects in small workshops, for example quality circles. (Imai 2012).

### 2.1.1 Benefits and challenges of continuous improvement

There are many advantages that can be gained through using continuous improvement activities in a company, some smaller and some great leaps in developing business processes. Examples of important benefits that are highlighted today are increased employee satisfaction and engagement, improved efficiency, standardised ways of doing things, improved safety, and waste reduction. Some of these examples even result in positive circles as for example increased employee engagement leads automatically to increased motivation to actively improve things.

Kaizen advantages can be divided into qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative benefits are easily measured and are often to more interest to the management. These advantages are, in addition to cost minimization, saving time, resource optimization, reduced lead times and cycle times and reduced inventories. Qualitative advantages of kaizen include reduced stress levels, wellbeing, and more pleasant working facilities.

According to Grace Duffy, improvement strategies can be applied not only on shop floor, but also in office functions of manufacturing companies or service companies. Many

companies have concluded that there are great benefits to be gained through systematic improvement activities and quality techniques. These benefits that a systems approach can lead to are for instance a more sustainable and cost-effective system, better collaboration across system with improved quality, and leveraged technology for greater utility for all. (G. Duffy, 2013.)

Employee engagement is a factor that is no longer overlooked when assessing business performance in general. There are several studies on the importance of employee satisfaction and engagement from different point of views. From a CI point of view, it is important to include employees from all levels of the organization in improving processes, mostly because employees are more likely to notice points of improvement in their own work than management, but also because it results in great advantages in terms of empowerment. According to S. Thamizhmanii & S. Hasan (2010) including employees in CI and TQM activities gives them the feeling of empowerment and improves job satisfaction, ambiguity, job involvement and organizational commitment.

Improved health & safety is another key area which is a great benefit for a company. By constantly improving HSE there will be fewer injuries and sick leaves and thus reduced costs. HSE policies are taken seriously in today's working environments and good HSE standards are a significant added value for marketing when trying to attract the best doers.

There are also challenges that need to be considered when implementing a continuous improvement system in a company. A study conducted by Backlund, and Sundqvist (2018) highlight some challenges that are present in project organizations. One challenge mentioned is the fact that project teams often begin to solve new problems rather than take time to review lessons learned from previous projects. The short-term nature of project work together with stress and time pressure often causes a lost opportunity to improve performance as the long-term view is forgotten. According to the study many project organizations also have a culture of strong autonomy amongst project managers and

poor compliance to common processes. For contractors the continuous improvement efforts are even more difficult as the customer has the control over the project. (Backlund, 2018).

### 2.1.2 Benchmarking & continuous improvement

Benchmarking is a method that should be considered when developing a continuous improvement system in an organisation. Benchmarking in other words is comparing your process to a similar one conducted by a competitor, usually one with the best ways of working in the business. The basic principle of benchmarking is to learn from others as well as to question your own activities as an organization. It is also a systematic and continuous way of comparing a company's effectiveness, quality, and productivity to the best ways of working within the leading organizations in the industry.

According to Bjorn Andersen, there are four reasons why benchmarking should be used when trying to improve an organization. Firstly, it helps organizations to understand and develop critical way of assessing the company's own processes. Secondly, it builds an open attitude towards searching for and sharing information within the company which leads to increased motivation for change and improvement. Benchmarking can also help organizations find new sources of improvement and new ideas from other fields of business. The final motivation for using benchmarking is to establish reference points for performance measurement of processes within the company. (Andersen, 2007. Page 223.)

### 2.1.3 Top innovative companies

Innovation can be described as a value adding activity that give strategic advantage against competition, but also a necessity in today's rapidly changing business environment. Claudia Ogrean compares in her article "Some insights on the world's most innovative companies and their defining characteristics" most innovative companies in the

world based on two major studies, one conducted by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and the other by PwC. The article concludes that the most innovative companies have to be both coherent and consistent when pursuing innovation, embracing digitalization and have been putting emphasis on R&D spending within the last ten years. Seven companies that are included in both BCG and PwC rankings of top 10 innovators are Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Samsung, Facebook, and Tesla. (Ogrean 2019).

According to Boston Consulting Group's report "Most Innovative Companies 2021: Overcoming the Innovation readiness Gap" list the 50 most innovative companies of 2021. The methodology measures innovation readiness to operate effectively and efficiently and it is based on a survey consisting of 1600 global innovation executives who are interviewed and assessed based on four different dimensions: Global Mindshare, Industry peer review, industry disruption and value creation. The study highlights five innovation readiness factors that make the top innovative companies successful. These are 1) clear ambition, 2) innovation domains, 3) performance management, 4) project management and 5) talent and culture. The most innovative companies tend to set clear targets that are strongly linked to the strategy.

The top management are the main drivers of innovation. Innovation domains mean that the best innovators are able to find the best customer opportunities and base their innovation strategy on that, in other words knowing the customer well and capitalising on it. Performance management means that the company objectives are transformed into measurable projects and tasks with well-defined KPI's. Project management on the other hand means that for innovation efforts to be effective, teams must be multidisciplinary and agile and have a good understanding of company's strategic advantage and utilise that in developing products and services. Finally, good leaders put their most talented people in ambitious innovation projects and support an open culture where people are encouraged to innovate and challenge the status quo.

The 2021 50 most innovative companies have more diversity in terms of gender and ethnic backgrounds among employees. The top innovators are tech companies that have been on the list for many years, and as expected, some pharmaceutical companies such as Pfizer and Moderna appear on the list. The full ranking can be seen in Picture 1.


**Picture 1** The 50 most innovative Companies of 2021 (BCG survey 2020-2021)

## 2.2. Success factors steering continuous improvement

When planning a continuous improvement system, there are factors that must be in place in order for the system to serve the organization in the best possible way. Studying the success factors related to continuous improvement leads to the following elements:

- Management commitment
- Employee engagement
- Recognizing key improvement areas and opportunities and steering idea collection towards supporting company strategy
- Promoting continuous improvement
- Rewarding system
- Process description

- Choosing a suitable tool
- Choosing correct metrics

### 2.2.1 Management commitment and communication

Literature suggests that management commitment plays a key part in employee motivation towards continuous improvement activities in an organisation. Jennifer Farris finds in her dissertation "An Empirical Investigation of Kaizen Event Effectiveness: Outcomes and Critical Success Factors" that management support had a direct correlation to employee attitude. Management support could mean correct tools and resources but also management communication regarding continuous improvement. I addition, taking part in developing areas that management highlights as important for the success of the company, seemed to have a positive impact on employee attitudes. (Farris 2006).

According to Boston Consulting Groups yearly report, 90% of companies that succeed in innovation, show clear top management ownership of their companies' innovation strategies. (BCG report 2021). Richard Zarbo makes in his article "Creating and Sustaining a Lean Culture of Continuous Process Improvement" about leadership ownership and communication the following:

> *"Leaders must reinforce a cultural transformation in the workers' perception of their work roles. This requires leaders to create structures for empowered workers to be accountable and successful, and to communicate, support, reward, and model this culture of engaged workers who are charged with identifying and resolving defects and eliminating waste. Leaders must be engaged and lead from "the shop floor" to use the manufacturing analogy. It is from this perspective that opportunities for improvement become evident daily at a very granular level."*

In other words, leaders and middle managers must create an environment and serve as a facilitator as well as provide all necessary tools and training so that the employees feel creative and encouraged to share their ideas.

### 2.2.2 Employee engagement

Jurburg et al. addresses the importance of getting employees involved and committed in the company's continuous improvement system in their study "What motivates employees to participate in continuous improvement activities?". By conducting a literature review combined with a Delphi study with 21 continuous improvement specialists, the researchers were able to pinpoint critical elements that are related to motivating employees to engage in CI activities. The results were modelled with an ISM approach to show the structural relationship between the factors.

The findings for employee engagement for CI activities were listed in a table and it included ten factors; CI alignment, rewards, internal communication, organisational support, training, CI methodology, self-efficacy, empowerment, social influence, and job satisfaction (Picture 2.) For the ISM model, 13 factors were taken into consideration to form the relationship model. In addition to the previously mentioned, three additional factors are included; ease of participating in the CI system, usefulness of participating in the CI system) and employees' intention to participate (Figure 5). The listed factors help to systematize continuous improvement in the organization so that it will not die down immediately after launching, which is a common pitfall when introducing continuous improvement in existing companies. A functioning kaizen system motivates everyone in the organization to keep striving for improvement in all business areas.

| Factor | Definition | Elements |
|---|---|---|
| (1) CI alignment | This factor deals with the definition, dissemination and understanding of group- and individual-level goals, objectives and tasks assigned by the organisation in terms of CI-related activities | Objectives<br>Shared vision<br>Coherence<br>Responsibility<br>Participation |
| (2) Rewards | This factor addresses the expectations that people have about the results achieved within the CI system, and how they consider, in the case they exist, that the different reward systems set by the organisation (economic and non-economic) could motivate employees' intention to participate in future CI activities | Attractiveness<br>Effort efficacy<br>Fair rewards<br>Motivation |
| (3) Internal communication | This factor searches for the existence of good vertical (top-down, bottom-up) and lateral (employee-employee) communication of CI-related information, and not so much about what specific tools are used for that | Involvement<br>Information<br>Knowledge sharing<br>Channels |
| (4) Organisational support | This factor talks about CI leadership inside the organisation, and about the organisational support given by top management to develop all improvement activities | Resources<br>Management involvement<br>Leadership<br>Support network |
| (5) Training | This factor includes all training activities that help to teach employees notions, tools and techniques that are useful for participating in the different CI activities promoted by the company | Knowledge<br>Awareness<br>Capabilities<br>Usefulness |
| (6) CI methodology | This factor refers to the extent to which the different practices, techniques and tools (included within the company's CI system) allow for the achievement of good results | Tools<br>Dynamic<br>Sustainability<br>Routines |
| (7) Self-efficacy | This factor reflects each worker's self-confidence level in terms of participating in CI activities, based on a self-assessment of his/her own capabilities | Autonomy<br>Assistance<br>Documentation<br>Time availability |
| (8) Empowerment | This factor refers to the amount of actual opportunities that top management gives workers to actively participate in the CI system | Participation<br>Leading opportunities<br>Decision-making<br>Opinions seeking |
| (9) Social influence | This factor reflects the potential positive or negative social influences that workers receive from closely related people (family, friends, co-workers, bosses, etc.) | Supervisor<br>Co-worker<br>Coaches<br>Environment |
| (10) Job satisfaction | This factor includes the most important aspects that affect each worker's personal satisfaction level at his/her workplace | Climate<br>Trust<br>Work organisation<br>Process owner<br>Workplace<br>Contract terms<br>Personal growth |

Picture 2. Final list of factors and elements (Jurburg et al. 2017).

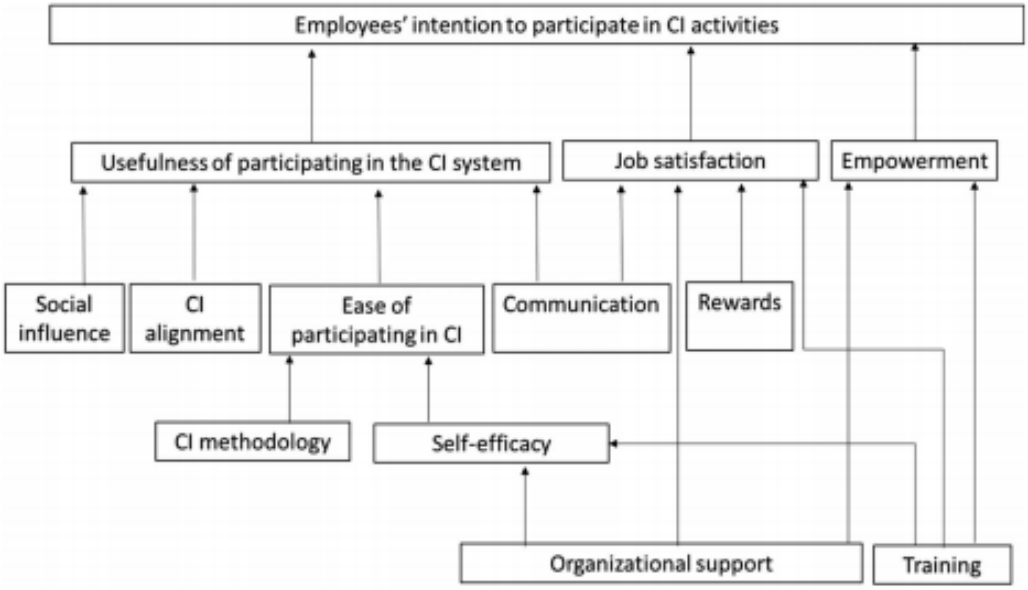



Figure 5. ISM model for employees' intention to participate. (Jurburg et al. 2017).

### 2.2.3 Steering idea collection towards supporting company strategy

To be able to optimize and guide idea creation and collection and eventually see the benefits in continuous improvement the company's strategic goals need to be well communicated throughout the organisation. Communicating the set targets helps the whole organisation to generate ideas that will move the company forward. Employees will most likely be more motivated to actively search for new improvement opportunities and feel more engaged if they are able to notice the connection between their efforts to improve processes and the company's strategic goals.

Grace Duffy refers to a study by IBM in which it was concluded that the key to successful continuous improvement is a strong connection between what is happening at the customer front lines and what the strategic objectives of the company are. Process improvement can be pointless if it is not strongly connected to the goal to meet customer requirements. This is a part of upper management's responsibility to know where the company is headed and understands the current state and what measures are needed to get to the goal state. Also, methods should be tied to clear benefits so that other approaches

will be connected to continuous improvement which will enable sustainable focus on both effective and efficient operations. (G. Duffy 2013.).

To encourage employees further to actively give improvement suggestions it is important that also those key improvement areas that are important in management's eyes are communicated across the company. Giving concrete problems to solve is an easy way of challenging employees to participate in developing the company's activities. This will also give effectively fast results whenever there is a problem that needs to be fixed.

### 2.2.4 Measuring ideas

An important factor in succeeding with innovation management is measuring the performance of effectiveness that idea collection has as well as give valuable data for the management. (Gerlach & Berm 2017). The metrics can be categorised into process specific, or ones that measure the outcome of the whole idea collection system. Garlach and Berm provide a table of suitable metrics for idea collection in companies. These include

**Idea process specific**

- Participation rate
- Number of suggested ideas
- Number of selected ideas
- Implementation rate
- Overall processing time
- Extent of rewards given

**Idea specific**

- Diversity of ideas
- Number of external ideas
- Number of high-quality ideas
- Average quality of ideas

- Variance in the quality of ideas
- Number of high-quality ideas across units
- Number of high-quality ideas from external sources
- Number of ideas that would not have happened without the idea management

**Outcomes**

- Cost savings
- Total savings/benefits ratio
- Revenue of ideas
- Number of products
- Number of months to first sale
- Product quality

The quality of an idea is judged by factors such as its effectiveness, feasibility, originality, and connectivity towards company objectives. (Gerlach & Berm 2017).

# 3 Method

This chapter explains how the research was conducted from start to finish. It clarifies the chosen approach, case company and unit of analysis and additional elements related to the topic. The process of this research project starts with defining the purpose of the study and clarifying the desired goals. It assesses first the current state of innovation management in the case company. It then moves on to collection of relevant data and scoping the project further to start building the process for continuous improvement and idea collection as well as selecting a supporting technology in the case company. Testing and launch are the final sections in the study and are briefly explained here.

## 3.1 Approach and data collection

The approach in this thesis is a case study conducted for Prohoc Group based in Vaasa. The method classifies as action research as the author is actively involved in the project and is employed by the case company. The unit of analysis will be the whole company as the new continuous improvement process and tool will serve all departments including site workers, production, and office employees. The purpose of the study is to build a continuous improvement process for the company, choose a suitable technology to support it and plan communications and other supporting activities for promoting continuous improvement in the company. The project will follow a simple stage & gate process.

## 3.2 Defining current way of working and existing tools

In the beginning of the project the as-is state of the continuous improvement process is defined by simple face-to-face discussions and e-mails with key persons as well as material from company intranet including process charts, strategy material and role descriptions. After the mapping of the current state, the improvement/ building process for a new CI process model begins. The improvement suggestions of the system will be

specified by using the findings in the theory part of this thesis as well as gathered ideas from department heads and other key personnel.

## 3.3 Defining key development areas

There are five current key focus areas in the case company. These are ensuring growth by organised customer management, improving the induction of new employees, and gaining competitive advantage through it, as well as improving the working conditions and processes involving employees not working in customer projects. Other central focus areas in the current company strategy include employee well- being which is strongly promoted, delivery organisations effectiveness and introduction of new products and service models. Final objective is to ensure value through systematisation and automation of internal services such as service portal and payroll administration. Parts that will be included in (or excluded from) kaizen and continuous improvement system will be discussed with the management of the company. Defining and mapping out improvement areas is important from measuring point of view.

## 3.4 Defining a benchmark and metrics

After the as-is state has been mapped and discussed, a benchmark is going to be defined. A baseline is also needed for the company to be able to measure future performance. At this point there will be a recap on the best practices from other companies that are introduced in the literature review of this project, and an evaluation on which points can and should be implemented in the case company is discussed in a meeting. This data includes features that have worked well in increasing innovativeness in the respective companies. In addition to this data information on existing metrics used for measuring improvements is gathered from academic publications on latest advancements. Combined with theoretical material the company's own needs and ideas will form the needed baseline and metrics. The possibility to measure continuous improvement through existing metrics in the company is discussed during management meetings.

## 3.5 Process flow chart delivery

The key part of the empirical study will be a process flow chart which will include steps starting from promoting idea collection inside the company until the maintenance and follow-up of the process. This process flow chart will be a high-level process chart and it will be carefully drawn together with the COO of the case company, and it will include different tasks that are related to the respective process steps. The continuous improvement process chart will be a part of a bigger process model that belongs under the company's quality management system. The process flow chart also includes inputs and outputs, as well as actors/roles and responsibility areas.

## 3.6 Idea collection tool selection

Choosing/designing a tool that is usable for all employees throughout the company is essential for CI system to provide desired results. In this part of the project there will be a meeting with a few key personnel to map out the needs regarding the usability of the tool. The design will be kept simple, and the employees will have digital access to the tool through company intranet both on pc and mobile. A suitable technology is chosen, and whether it is possible to use existing company platforms or is there a need for investment in this area, is also discussed. In this meeting the participants will brainstorm and decide how the tool enables employees to give new ideas that support the company strategy. The possibility of utilizing the tool as a form of a crowd sourcing method, for finding solutions to different individual problems, is explored.

The project ends with a testing phase and launch. A test group is chosen, and different organisational groups are defined for training purposes. Training is a crucial part of this projects' success. Management engagement is important to get employees to feel encouraged to share their ideas. Process owners who are responsible for implementing

ideas are trained thoroughly so that they understand the continuous improvement philosophy and suggested ways of working when implementing ideas.

# 4 Results

The aim of the results section of this thesis is to document the process of building a continuous improvement system in the case company Prohoc Oy, specifically targeted on idea collection from employees across the company. As stated in previous chapters, this study is action research as the project has been conducted in-house together with the management team and the author has been actively involved as an employee. The goal of this research is to build a well-functioning process for continuous improvement and idea collection from employees throughout the organisation. Prohoc wants to engage and empower all employees in giving their development inputs on their work as well as company culture. The aim of this study is to deliver a set of elements on how to build an idea collection process from the start so that the same process can easily be transferred to another company or other organisation.

## 4.1 project plan

This project follows a simple stage- gate model to easily follow progress of the project. The project has four stages: 1) Planning & ideation, 2) Development, 3) Testing- and Launch. For these stages, different activities, outputs, and gates are planned as shown in Figure 4.

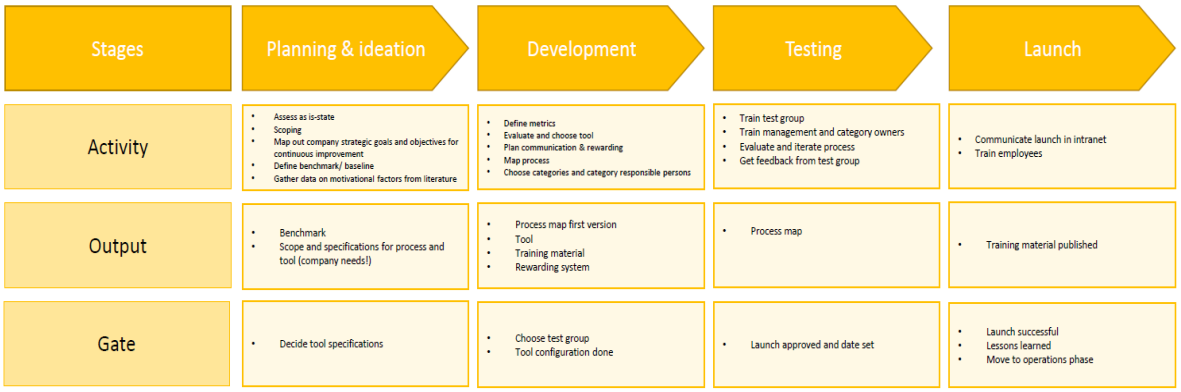
The main activities included in the planning and ideation phase are to assess the current state of continuous improvement in the case company, to plan the scope of the initiative, map out the strategic goals of the company and think about how collecting ideas from employees could help reach the targets, to set a benchmark and a baseline of the level which this type of company should aim for in generating ideas. Literature on past studies shows what elements motivate employees to share their ideas and a success plan will be drafted. The outputs or deliverables in the first stage are hence a benchmark, scope

draft (analysis of company needs) for process and tool selection. The gate in this stage is the decision of what type of tool the company should invest in.

The second stage is a development phase where the main activities are to define metrics, evaluate tool scope and choose a suitable tool, plan internal communication & rewarding system for idea collecting, make a first draft on the process and choose categories and category owners. The outputs in the development stage are hence the first version of process, chosen tool, training materials, and rewarding system. The gates in this stage are decision on test group as well as tool configuration.

The aim of the testing phase is to have the training for the system done for test group, management, and category owners, evaluate and iterate process further and get feedback from test group. The deliverable is a finalised process map. The gate in this phase is the approval from management to launch and decide on launch date/timeline.

The Launch phase is where the launch is communicated in company intranet for the whole personnel. The employees receive training either live or through intranet material. The deliverable in this phase is to have the training material published in company intranet. The gates are success of the launch, a lesson learned- report and decision to move to operations. After the final stage, the project phase is considered as done, after which it moves to operations phase where the process monitoring, follow-up and further development continues.




**Picture 2** Project stage-gate model

## 4.2 Scoping

The project started with a planning phase where different background data were gathered to assess current state of continuous improvement in the organisation as well as defining the objectives for continuous improvement at Prohoc. The data were discussed in several meetings together with higher management of the company. The data used for scoping were

- Analysis of as is- state of continuous improvement and idea collection at Prohoc
- Company strategy materials, specifically objectives and “must win battles”
- Literature review including what are the success factors in launching a new idea collecting/ CI-process, what motivates employees to participate in innovation activities in a company and what are the most innovative companies and what are they doing right in terms of innovation management
- Company organisation and structure, and what for example are the needs of each employee group in terms of motivation, concrete usability of an idea collection tool
- Existing company metrics including different customer value, and employee value related metrics

Prohoc's mission is to empower people in the world of industrial projects and believes that when employees are able to develop themselves and their work as well as the company culture in which they work, we are in the heart of employee engagement. Therefore, Prohoc finds it important to give everyone the possibility to improve their work conditions in Finland and abroad. Creating an innovation culture is seen as an enabler for the company to renew itself constantly, ensure competitive edge and create customer value as well as support the company culture which is people centric.

It was clear that the process description as well as other specifications should meet the needs of a company that is mainly focused on project management services but has also employees working in production and administrative tasks. To achieve this objective, the process should be fairly agile but detailed so that all business functions are covered. All business functions are described on a correct level and each function or process has for example its own owner who is responsible for the implementation of ideas.

According to company strategy material (Prohoc Operatiivinen Toimintamalli 2020-2022. Power Point presentation), Prohoc has divided their functions and targets according to whom they bring value. The three main strategic target areas are owner value-, employee value- and customer value targets. Additionally, there are a few environmental targets that the company wants to achieve.

The owner value objectives include for instance renewal of management model, targets for growth (turnover in EUR for each group company), profitability targets and cost effectiveness targets. Employee value objectives include targets for example for good leadership, internal communications, eNPS (Employee Net Promoter Score), onboarding experience and development of internal services. Customer value objectives include targets for sales order intake, Customer NPS (Net Promoter Score), loyalty of existing customers, new openings on renewable sector and ensuring continuous competitive edge. The objectives include target names, metrics, target values and responsible persons in the organisation. Environmental targets are reducing waste, ensuring 5S activities, and

taking into use a company metric for calculating impact on environment. All these targets are listed in detail in the appendix which is hidden due to case company's request as it includes sensitive numbers and targets. Example of the strategic goals list is seen in "picture 4. Strategic Objectives for Employee Value, Well-being, and Safety (In Finnish)".

Prohoc has listed in their strategy material their key "Must Win – battles" which in other words are the most critical development areas and challenges for the business. These are:

1) Growth – systematic and well organised sales and customer management
2) Quality recruitment and onboarding of new employees
3) Delivery organisation and services
4) Employee well-being – good leadership and development of skills
5) Internal service platform development (includes development of internal communication and automation)

**TYÖNTEKIJÄARVOTAVOITTEET, TYÖKYKY JA TURVALLISUUS**

| Tavoite | Mittari | Tavoitearvo | Vastuurooli ja henkilö |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Sairauspoissaolojen minimointi** | Sairauspoissaolot pv/hlö/vuosi # | Alle 2,4 | CHRO |
| **Työkyvyn parantaminen ja ylläpito** | Työkyky hyvä tai erinomainen % | Yli 85% | CHRO |
| | Työkyky heikko % | Alle 3% | CHRO |
| | Työkyky erittäin heikko # | 0 | CHRO |
| **Stressitason laskeminen** | Stressitaso alhainen tai erittäin alhainen % | Yli 85% | CHRO |
| | Stressitaso hälyttävä % | Alle 5% | CHRO |
| | Stressitaso erittäin hälyttävä # | 0 | CHRO |
| **Hyvän työturvallisuuskulttuurin ylläpito** | Työtapaturmia # | 0 | CEO |
| | Vakavia työtapaturmia # | 0 | CEO |
| | Läheltäpiti-ilmoitukset # | 100 | CEO |
| | Tapaturmataajuus TRIF | Alle 15 | CEO |
| | Tapaturmataajuus LTIF | Alle 7 | CEO |
| **Jatkuvan parantamisen käyttöönotto** | Ideoiden määrä | 50 | Service Agent |
| | Ideoiden tekijöiden määrä | 25 | Service Agent |

**TRIF (Total Recordable Incident Frequency)**
*Kaikki kirjatut työpaikkatapaturmat miljoonaa tehtyä työtuntia kohden*

**LTIF (Lost Time Incident Frequency)**
*Vähintään yhden työkyvyttömyyspäivän aiheuttaneiden työpaikkatapaturmien määrä miljoonaa tehtyä työtuntia kohti.*

Picture 4 Strategic Objectives for Employee Value, Well-being, and Safety (In Finnish)".

Metrics considered in the initial phase were such that are directly related to the stated strategic goals or “must win”- battles. As it is somewhat difficult to know how to monitor the success of the CI-process and how the amount or quality of ideas will correlate to the business metrics, it was decided that a few key metrics be chosen for a start. Those metrics will be followed and analysed if direct impact from employee ideas can be seen and adjusted further on. These metrics are

1) Turnover
2) NPS (customer Net Promoter Score). Target value 55.
3) eNPS (employee Net Promoter Score). Target value 56.

In addition, two simple metrics are set for the process itself. The metrics are

4) Number of ideas per year. Target number of ideas is 50 per year.
5) Amount of unique idea generators per year. Target number is 25 per year.

Additional KPI’s suggested by literature will be added as the idea collection system takes off. For example, overall processing time and implementation rate are metrics that can be taken into use as soon as there is relevant data to be seen. Data on rewarding as well as the different quality factors mentioned in literature (eg. Diversity of ideas, number of high-quality ideas and average quality of ideas) are metrics that are likely to be of interest for the case company. Finally, impact on outcomes (eg. Product quality, cost savings and savings/benefits ratios) can be seen after some time and higher number of received ideas.

These background elements provided a preliminary scope for the process description as well as specifications for selecting a suitable tool. The factors driving continuous improvement from literature review gave a good framework for promoting continuous improvement in the company.

## 4.3 Continuous improvement process description

As stated in the method chapter, designing the process, and creating a process map is an essential deliverable of this thesis. The process is what is seen as crucial for the system to run smoothly, as is with every function in a company. The process type used for all processes in the case company's quality management system is SIPOC / high- level process mapping, which aims to in a simple manner explain what happens in a process, and who are involved and what are the related inputs and outputs.

The goal of this process is to ease decision making around idea implementation and make it more agile, and all active innovators and best ideas get the appreciation they deserve. When the process has clear steps and responsibilities are delegated, the implementation will also be quicker and transparent. Bringing the process into the quality management system also promotes transparency and makes it a more systematic approach when it is included in audits. The process is divided into six steps with inputs and controls, actors as well as outputs. They are mapped out in the company's Quality Management handbook as follows:

Steps:

1. Promote continuous development
2. Create and collect ideas
3. Categorise ideas
4. Evaluate and collect feedback
5. Plan and implement
6. Measure and compensate ideas

Actors:

- Process Owner

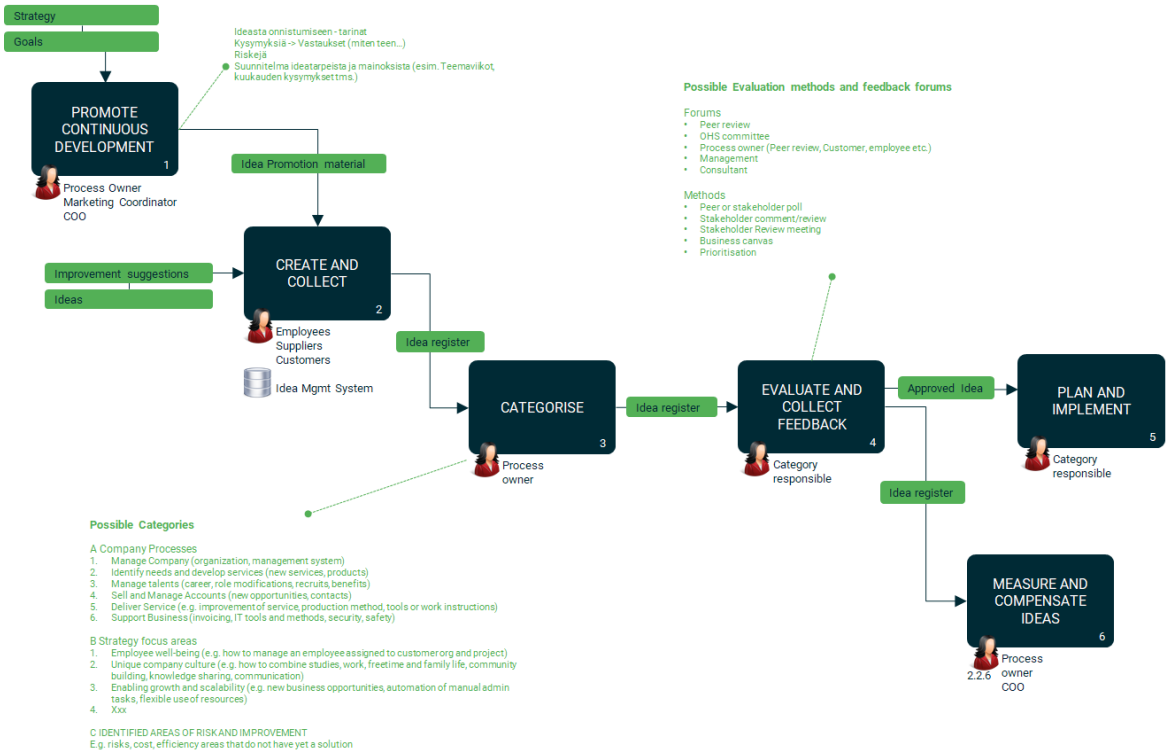
- Marketing co-ordinator
- COO (Chief Operating Officer)
- Employee
- Supplier
- Customer
- Category Responsible

Inputs and controls:

- Strategy
- Goals
- Promotion materials
- Operative and business risks
- Ideas and improvement suggestions

Outputs:

- Idea register




Picture 5 Continuous improvement process map

### 4.3.1 promote continuous development

In the first step “promote continuous development” the continuous improvement philosophy is promoted internally in the company. The actors in this process step are process owner, marketing co-ordinator and COO (Chief Operating Officer). Inputs listed are company strategy and goals. Output is idea promotion material. The promotion materials are included in the company communication plan, and they include the following activities:

1. Guidelines on how to use the tool, practical use cases and presentation of the process and thoughts behind the program and philosophy.

2. Weekly articles related to continuous improvement which help bring awareness to the program and new tool. These articles include topics such as “what is continuous improvement”, “why has the company launched a continuous improvement way of working and tool”, success stories from other companies.
3. Success stories from new ideas from start to implementation and rewarding will also be posted in the company intranet. This will be a crucial motivator for employees, as the idea owner gets recognition, and other employees see that the ideas are implemented and rewarded.
4. Continuous articles and insights from the top management, related to strategy and critical development areas. Communicating strategy to the floor helps employees in seeing the big picture and helps to recognise areas where new ideas are needed.
5. Safety and risk- articles (although the company has a separate form for filing near miss and HSE reports, these have common improvement philosophy behind them
6. Idea challenges. Ideas are actively encouraged through crowd sourcing method where anybody from the organisation can ask for ideas to a problem. Example problem could be: “We have low visitor numbers on our web page, and we want to increase the number. We need ideas on how to reach 100 visits/week.”

Different theoretical sources point out that one of the major pitfalls when launching a continuous improvement program is that the system is launched but dies down after a while due to adequate monitoring and continuous promotion. Therefore, setting up a communication plan to promote continuous improvement plays an important role in succeeding. An innovation culture can take time to build, and some planning and standardisation activities should be included. Early on in this project it was discussed that the CI system should be incorporated into the company’s communication plan so that it will create positive encouragement and reminder for the employees to participate in improving company activities.

As shown earlier, the first box in the process chart shows the tasks that have been chosen for promotion of the system. These tasks include recognizing strategic development areas and risks, which are a part of the management's responsibility. Ensuring transparency of the processing status is included in the tool (notifications are created automatically in the tool), however the rest of the tasks are heavily linked to internal marketing and the communication plan that the company has. Communicating company strategy and goals as well as the continuous improvement philosophy inside the organization are important to form an understanding of what the company wants to achieve and what types of areas it wishes to improve. Marketing events and cycles were discussed and agreed upon in a meeting together with the COO and the responsible marketing co-ordinator.

The detailed marketing plan for continuous improvement was made together with the company's marketing co-ordinator. It was decided that the continuous improvement program would be promoted in the company intranet through a series of articles. The communication cycle was set to be approximately once a month, at the end of each month, to be specific. The content of the articles would be provided by the continuous improvement co-ordinator and the articles written and published by the marketing co-ordinator.

The first article to be published in the company intranet was set to be a short teaser that would be published before the test group piloting starts. The teaser contains information such as what the new CI tool is as well as why it is taken into use, benefits for the company as well as the employees. The article also mentions shortly that there will be a compensation model connected to ideas. Short timeline for the piloting phase as well as a few pictures of how the web-based tool looks like and what features it holds are also included in the first article.

The continuous improvement philosophy was decided to be chopped into a series of short articles with different CI-related themes. This way the theory behind the innovation program would be familiarized with all employees but the articles would be short

enough for everyone to keep their interest in reading them. Another form of promotion articles is going to be focused on “success stories”. In other words, there will be articles about ideas that might have saved significant amounts of time, money, or that have increased quality or improved something and thus have been compensated. These types of articles are fun to read, and they are seen as potentially motivating towards other employees to strive for improving their work. On the other hand, it gives credit to the person responsible for the successful idea and hence motivates them to continue innovating more.

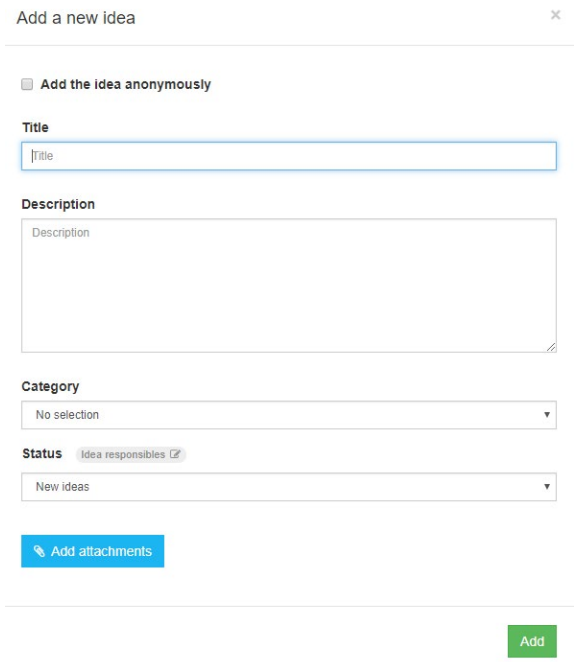
The final type of promotional article in the CI communication plan is occasional idea challenges that are set by the management, or anyone in the organization. The challenges or problems are planned to be fed into the idea collection tool similarly as ideas, however promoting them also in the intranet can potentially activate some of the employees that may not yet be active users of the idea collection tool. The articles will potentially spark conversations within teams which will further feed into the innovation culture inside the organization. The idea is that a process owner or anybody having a problem or development area can publish it in company intranet and ask others to brainstorm solutions for it. This type of crowd sourcing activity can also bring benefits for the company in the form of knowledge/best practices sharing across teams and organisations.

### 4.3.2 Create and Collect

The second step “Create and Collect” is where the process starts on a concrete level. The inputs here are improvement suggestions and ideas that exist, are talked about for example at coffee tables but have not been written down in the system yet. Actors here are all employees, suppliers, and customers. Idea management system is also marked as actor here. The output is idea register, where all new ideas are registered. The idea creator writes down the idea into the chosen tool/application. The needed information is

1. Title
2. Description of idea
3. What problem does the idea help address and how
4. Estimation on possible impact in EUR or other impact
5. Category

The idea creator is allowed to choose whether they wish to give their idea anonymously. The creator writes down their idea, with preferably some background information on what problem the idea might solve, what the potential benefits are and how they think the idea should be implemented. Finally, the idea creator chooses a category which they think describes the nature of the idea best.




Picture 6 New idea

### 4.3.3 Categorise Ideas

In the third step the idea is categorized into correct category, which are determined by company key functions. There are 12 categories:

1. Products and services

2. Processes and tools
3. Customer service
4. Employee satisfaction
5. HR and company culture
6. Environment
7. Production methods
8. Safety
9. Sales opportunities
10. Resourcing & recruitment
11. Marketing & communications
12. Other ideas

The categories all have respective responsible persons who have the task to decide and act on the idea. The principle is that all ideas (especially those not requiring any or small investments) should be processed with short lead times (fail fast strategy), and that all ideas should be implemented, whether it is certain that the idea is feasible. Ideas requiring large investments have longer lead times as the decision making have to be escalated according to company Powers and Representation Policy, which determines for example who or which roles in the company are allowed to make purchases exceeding specified limits. Category owners' responsibilities and principles for way of working are documented and presented in trainings for persons concerned. They are listed as follows:

- Category owner's responsibility is to assess the usefulness and viability of the idea
- Category owners decide if the idea will be implemented and plans the schedule for implementation
- If an idea is not to be implemented, or will be implemented later, the category owner is to always provide arguments for the presenter of the idea
- As a rule of thumb, all ideas should be tested and implemented, especially ones that do not require large monetary investments

- The category owner names a suitable responsible person from the organisation to carry through the implementation

The initial categories and owners for the group companies are listed in the following table:

**Prohoc Oy & Prohoc Projects Oy & Prohoc Services Oy:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Products and services / Customer value | Chief Business Officer |
| Process and tools / back office | Chief Operating Officer |
| Customer service / customer value | Chief Business Officer |
| Employee satisfaction / employee value | Chief Operating Officer |
| HR and company culture/ employee value | Chief Operating Officer |
| Environment / HSEQ | HSE Officer |
| Production methods / ProID / Documentation services | Operations Manager & Documentation Production Manager |
| Safety: /HSEQ | HSE Officer |
| Sales opportunities: /Customer value | Sales Director |
| Resourcing and recruitment: / employee value | Chief Operating Office |
| Marketing & communications: | Marketing and Communications Co-ordinator |
| Other: | Continuous Improvement Co-ordinator |
| Project Services | Continuous Improvement Co-ordinator |

**Prohoc Proactor Oy**:

| | |
|---|---|
| Products and services: | Business Development Manager & Operations Manager |
| Production processes and ways of working: | Business Development Manager |
| Customer service and -satisfaction: | Operations Manager |
| Employee wellbeing and -satisfaction: | Business Development Manager & Operations Manager |

| | |
|---|---|
| Human Resources and company culture: | Business Development Manager & Operations Manager |
| Environment and health: | Business Development Manager |
| Tools and equipment: | Business Development Manager & Production Co-ordinator |
| Health and safety: | Business Development Manager & Production Co-ordinator |
| Sales: | Operations Manager |
| Resourcing and recruitment: | Operations Manager |
| Marketing and Communications: | Business Development Manager & Operations Manager (& Marketing and Communications Co-ordinator) |
| Other: | Business Development Manager |

### 4.3.4 Evaluate and collect feedback

The following step in the process is where the idea is evaluated by the category owner mentioned in the previous chapter. The category responsible discusses with the idea owner about additional details such as impact on business and savings and shares the idea with possible other stakeholders who are linked to the function or field that the idea targets, or who otherwise could have valuable input towards the idea. The selected idea collection tool allows other employees to like and comment on the idea which starts the idea iteration immediately. The category owner makes the decision whether to proceed with implementation or rejects the idea/ moves it to a pending- status to be revisited later.

### 4.3.5. Plan and implement

When an idea is approved, it moves to implementation phase. The category owner selects a suitable person or a team to implement the idea. Many improvement suggestions are expected to be small, and they are easy to give a green light to, which should happen without unnecessary delay. As stated before, quick implementation is the best motivator for employees to keep feeding ideas into the system and to keep up an innovative spirit.

A “fail fast, learn fast”- approach is seen as an effective way of implementation, both cost wise and motivation-wise as results are seen quickly. Larger development ideas might require further iteration by several team members or be successful when discussed cross- organisationally. To ensure idea success, each larger scale idea is implemented as a development project with the use of strategy tools and processes such as Business Canvas and Stage- Gate Model. The implementation phase should follow the simple steps: 1) plan implementation, 2) execute implementation and 3) measure and learn from the idea.

#### 4.3.6. Measure and compensate ideas

The final step in the process chart is where ideas are measured and compensated. The chosen tool gives the category owner a possibility to assess the impact of the idea in terms of revenue generated or cost savings. Other impacts can be in quality such as employee experience related ideas. Each category owner makes an assessment on the idea after the implementation in their best ability. The rewarding is decided based on the assessments in the management meeting or the related management tables. The rewarding is done based on a rewarding system, which was drafted together with the help from the company’s CFO (Chief Financial Officer).

## 4.4 Rewarding system

One crucial motivation factor in encouraging employees to take part in CI activities is personal compensation in forms of money or goods. As employees are motivated by several different internal and external motivation factors, it is important to engage and reward active participation in different ways. A fair and transparent compensation model that is well communicated throughout the organization will increase the likeliness to participate for many employees.

The aim in this workshop was to discuss and plan a monetary compensation model for the idea collection process. The participants in this workshop were the author, COO, CFO as well as a Power BI specialist. The plan also includes responsibilities for the CI co-ordinator, category owners as well as the management team. A process cycle was also selected according to CI/ kaizen philosophy (fast implementation).

During the discussion it was agreed that the compensation model should be documented, clear and transparent so that it will not create a sense of favouritism or vague rewarding towards certain ideas or persons. It also helps the management in the evaluation process for the same reasons when there is a specified protocol for rewarding continuous improvement. As the criteria is documented in a clear way it is also easy to be communicated which again motivates employees to actively seek improvement opportunities in their work.

To get most use out of the rewarding system in a multidisciplinary company it was agreed that there needs to be several levels or types of monetary rewards. This is also due to the different types of development areas and metrics, which means that the continuous improvement ideas will most likely vary according to impact, but also it might be easier for some departments to come up with ideas that are easily connected to cost savings (for example production vs. consulting). Also, some people are more improvement oriented and some more insecure about expressing their ideas. For these reasons four levels of rewarding was agreed upon:

1. Lottery
2. Significant innovations that bring financial benefits to the company
3. Spot rewarding
4. Reward for most active participants

The first level of rewarding will be a lottery that is done once a month with a prize of certain value. Another one will be done once a year at the end of the year. The prize of

the lottery done on a year basis will have a larger value than the one done once a month. The rules are that every participant that have submitted at least one idea per period (month or year) takes part in the lottery. One person has only one lottery ticket.

The second level involves all ideas that can be measured in a way that it is possible to show that financial benefits can be or have been gained from the idea. Here the individual or group is entitled to a certain percentage of that benefit, which is shown in more detail in the appendix. In the tool the categories are linked to specific metrics that are used in assessing the impact of the idea in question. An example case might be that an employee comes up with an improvement in a production method that saves time up to 50% of the time of the production phase/task. The idea might require some investment in a tool, but eventually it will save a significant amount of money for the company. The benefits are estimated, and the employee gets a specified percentage of that estimate. The measurement calculations should be transparent for the employees and easily argued.

The third level of the CI rewarding policy are spot rewards, which can be used when the management sees that an idea creates significant benefits for the company, but it cannot be clearly measured financially. Examples of ideas that falls into this category might be improvement in company culture or HR policies. These ideas are evaluated by the category owner (for instance quality manager) together with management. Spot rewarding is used also in other areas such as recruitment leads and good customer feedback.

As a fourth level of rewarding the management can reward once a year one person or a group of people who have been the most active in participating in idea generation according to tool score board, which calculates points based on ideas generated, comments and likes left on other people's ideas.

The rewarding system is published in company intranet and the document will be available for every employee to see even if the content changes, to ensure transparency.

Rewarded ideas can be published in intranet as articles with the permission from idea owner. The rewarding does not include management or those employees that have development targets included in their job descriptions. However, ideas and suggestions for other departments, processes or functions can be taken into account.

## 4.5 Selecting the idea collection tool

It was clear from the beginning that to get employees motivated to give improvement suggestions, many while working in unconventional working environments such as on-site, the tool would have to meet certain specifications, be simple to use and easy to get access to. Another criteria was that the application should integrate well into the company's existing tools (Share Point). The tool selection process took in total four sessions where the specifications were discussed, a tool was chosen, and prepared for test group phase.

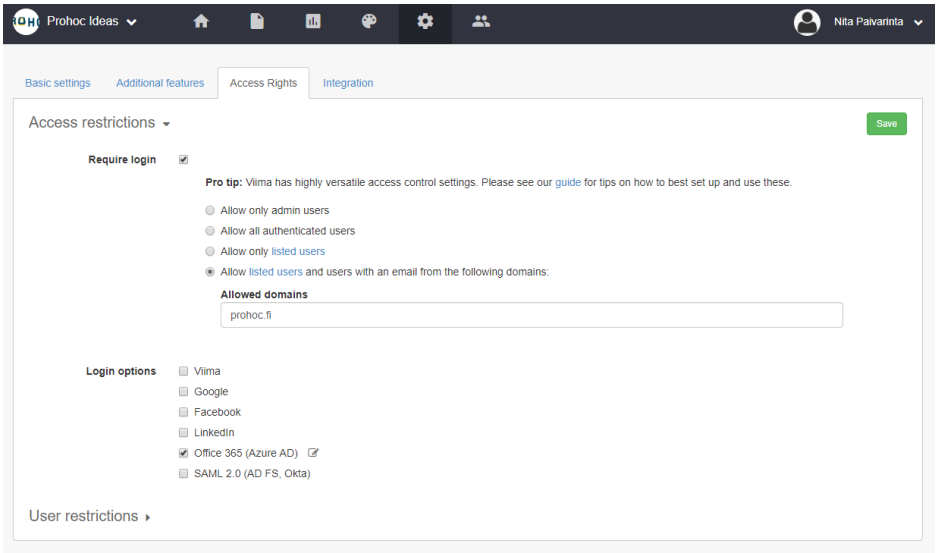
The process began by researching different applications available on the market. The options were narrowed down to three. Out of the three options one stood out quite quickly as it met nearly all the previously defined specifications and features that were seen as crucial from the process point of view. The chosen application is called Viima, and it is a Finnish ideation and innovation tool that is designed to assist the user in the process of making an idea into an innovation. A demo session was set up between a representative of Viima and Prohoc where different features were discussed. The application includes the following features which were well aligned with what Prohoc had specified beforehand:

- Integrations for Microsoft 356, Teams, Share Point
- Easy usability and mobile application option
- Collaboration, possibility to like and comment on ideas
- Traceability and transparency (ability to see idea status)

- Metrics for follow-up, and options for statistical presentation and visual reporting. Also, possibility to create own metrics and evaluation standards for rewarding
- Process cycle steered automatically by the application
- Possibility to create own idea categories and to assign responsible persons
- Notifications for users
- Language options (Finnish, English, Swedish)
- Pricing 3,50€/month per user (premium subscription)
- Finnish company that provides good customer service

There was a desire to have an option to share ideas also through e-mail on the company's side, but the representative explained that it is not an option at this stage. This option could however be developed (for extra fee) if needed in the future. The Continuous improvement part of the tool that Prohoc is interested in, and which was the topic of this meeting is only a part of the Viima application. In addition to continuous improvement boards, the application offers possibilities for collaborative strategic work, idea challenges, innovation management and open innovation.

After the demo, the decision was made to select Viima as the new kaizen tool, to test it and assess it after a while when it has been in use. The tool was configured to match the specifications with correct categories and category owners linked to them. Board description, logos, url-link, and specifications such as likes per user and notification settings were adjusted. Finally, access restrictions were defined (allowed domains and log in options). It was decided to make separate boards for Proactor and rest of Prohoc Group companies, due to the nature of their business working in close relation with customer in production. Proactor also wanted to tailor their board a bit differently, having different categories more suitable for their environment, and having the board initially in finnish.




Picture 7 Configuration view of Viima- tool


Figure 8 Picture of Viima idea collection board user interface

## 4.6 Test group

The test group was selected after the tool configuration had been done. This was the second gate in the stage gate- process before the project would progress on to the testing phase. It was agreed that the piloting phase would be short and simple, 2 weeks. The

pilot group was initially agreed to be the management and administration teams (ca. 20 people), but as a development manager from the group subsidiary Prohoc Proactor Oy showed a strong interest towards the process and made a wish to have the tool in place as soon as possible, it was decided to include them already in the test phase.

## 4.7 Training

The first step in the testing stage in the project was to plan the training of process and tool. The tool itself is very easy to use and it guides the user from start to finish, however it was important to train the employees on the process and dive deeper into the philosophy of continuous improvement; why it is done and what are the benefits that it can have for each employees own work. The promotional material mentioned in chapter "4.1.1 promote continuous development" plays an important part in the training as there will be a series of CI-related articles published in the company intranet. The training includes the following deliverables and tasks:

- Training session for pilot group & written instructions
- Training session for management and process owners & written instructions
- Training of whole organisation & written instructions
- Including continuous improvement in induction and New Employee Handbook

The trainings began with the training of management which was naturally done in one of the management meetings. The CEO supported by giving background information on why the company wants to put effort in continuous improvement and enabling more innovative thinking. This was important in getting all of the management on board, as it is one of the key success factors in managing continuous improvement. A quick guide was given through the tool and process, which were well received and understood by the team, as well as instructions and principles for the category owners, as many of the category owners are in the management team. It was communicated to the management team, that the project would start the testing phase and that they are welcome to

try the tool out by themselves and give feedback. A launch date was also communicated to the management team. Category owners are listed in chapter “4.1.3 Categorise Ideas”.

After the meeting written guidelines were handed out. Those category owners and members of administration that were not in management, were given instructions separately one by one. A separate training session was also given to Proactor, where team leaders were present. The key points communicated in the training session for the test group was to test out the tool and see if the process is coherent and if there are some usability errors that can immediately be spotted and fixed. Finally, the instructions were incorporated in the induction material for new employees and the “New Employee Handbook”.

## 4.8 Launch

The final stage of this study was the launch stage where the continuous improvement launch was communicated to the whole company. A short article was posted during the test phase for the whole organisation with the intention of letting employees know that a new continuous improvement process is starting soon, what it means, and a short teaser on what the tool will look like. Together with the management, the CEO suggested that he would make a video blog in the company intranet where he would talk about latest strategy development activities and give a short announcement on the new continuous improvement system. The idea about a video blog came about when the company had been working remotely due to COVID-19 pandemic for two months and the management thought that a video might be more interesting communication tool than regular intranet posts.

It was decided that the CI-coordinator make also the instructions for the whole organisation also in a video blog post in addition to the written ones. After the launch a short lessons learned- meeting took place between the author, CEO and COO to conclude the project and make a plan about following activities that would be done in the operations

phase. These activities would be further developing the monitoring and the idea register as well as reporting planning for analysing the gathered data as soon as there will be more ideas generated.

# 5 Conclusions and suggestions for further research

This chapter gives a summary of the research project, conclusions on the empirical study of implementing a continuous improvement/ idea collection process in the case company. The chapter includes discussion on what could have been done in more detail and how the process could be further developed, some notes on how to follow up the progress as well as managerial implications. Finally, the chapter discusses some larger pieces of research that could be done as separate units of study/ thesis projects.

## 5.1 Summary and conclusions

This study was conducted for case company Prohoc Oy or alternatively referred to as Prohoc Group. The aim was to essentially map a new process for idea collection from employees, choose a tool for it and implement them in the whole organisation. The company's old idea collection tool had been forgotten and the company wanted to renew it with the intention of empowering its employees and to get the best development ideas from them. To achieve this, a literature review was made to find out what it takes to successfully take into use a new continuous improvement process; what the principles of the philosophy are and what are the success factors and what steps the company needs to make to get the best ideas from employees and to make employees feeling empowered doing so.

The literature review reveals that a significant success factor for continuous improvement is the management commitment and that to be able to engage employees to continuously improve their work, supervisors need to provide support and the upper management's responsibility is to provide the supervisors with training, support, and resources to create and maintain an environment that engages employees to participate. Other success factors were recognizing key opportunities and improvement areas by carefully linking the company strategy to innovation incentives, good communication about continuous improvement, rewarding and good measuring and analysis. Choosing

tools that are easily used and supports the process by automations was also seen as essential from employee engagement perspective as well as process and management perspective.

The empirical study was broken down into a simple stage gate model which covered the project from planning stage until launch. By gathering different data from literature review, company strategy material and analysis of current state and where the company wants to be, the team managed to make a scope for the process map and specifications for a new idea collection tool. A tool was found that matched the set requirements and which steers also the process. A communication plan needed to be made to promote continuous improvement in the company. A rewarding policy was also established.

It can be said that the communication plan was found to have a great importance in promoting the tool and the team decided to use enough hour to brainstorm different ways of sparking interest towards the system among employees. One good idea was to create idea challenges or crowd source different problems that a specific department might have. This would require asking different process owners to share their current problems and then publicly ask for the whole organisation to participate in solving that problem. Another factor that was found to be more important than initially thought was the training of all employees. Especially crucial is to train the management members and supervisors/ other key actors so that they embrace the CI philosophy and act as promoters for it.

The value of this thesis is that it documents a project of starting a continuous improvement function in a company where it is outdated or missing completely. The documentation gives a recipe for what factors need to be considered before launching an idea collection system, what steps need to be made and what keeps the process going after the launch. It also gives an overview on employee motivators and on the other hand how can a company benefit from having motivated and empowered employees.

## 5.2 Discussion and notes

One aspect of this project that will need further planning is the fact that continuous improvement happens constantly in all areas of the business. People have different views on what constitutes innovation and what should and can be fed into the idea collection tool. Continuous improvement happens through different channels within the organisation. These channels can be, in addition to idea collection tool, for example near miss reports, accident reports, 5S- rounds, risk analysis processes, customer feedback/claim reports, employee wellbeing surveys, project lessons learned meetings, and so on. The question is, should all improvement suggestions be measured and monitored in the same place? One possible solution is that all these channels should generate tasks or ideas that are fed into the idea register and treated in the same way.

In the process description phase “Plan and Implement” it is stated that all larger scale ideas shall be treated as a development project and suitable strategic tools should be used to ensure idea success. In this thesis only a couple simple templates for this purpose are introduced. However, there are a vast number of different tools, processes, and methods for innovative project management, such as Agile Methodology, Design Thinking, Design Sprints, Scrum and so on. These methods are not in use in the case company except within the top management who use some strategic tools for strategy work. There could be some use for training on these methods for key personnel, who could leverage them in the daily operations and development initiatives.

Another area of this study that will require further work was the measuring of continuous improvement activities. To not make the follow-up too complicated from the start, the team decided to take a simple approach to measuring with only a handful of key metrics chosen from strategic objectives as well as a couple of KPI’s for the system itself. Additional KPI’s suggested by literature will be added as the idea collection system takes off. For example, overall processing time and implementation rate are metrics that can be taken into use as soon as there is relevant data to be seen. Recommendations for

managers and category owners can be made based on the gathered data. The author has a strong interest to have a more detailed plan on measuring the business benefits of CI- activities and engaging employees so that they can be demonstrated to the management (and rest of the organisation!), and most importantly to help plan and steer the idea generation towards even stronger innovation culture by for example targeted idea challenges. One suggestion is also to start calculating the return on innovation investments for the whole company, which is not a strong focus currently in the company as the company has not had a R&D department or an innovation program or alike. As the company grows and starts developing more strategic and systematic innovation processes the metrics become more diverse.

It is to be noted that as this project has been going on, the company has been in the transition of moving from a traditional management group thinking into a new lower hierarchy management model with the idea that all decisions are made in, as the company likes to call them, “management tables”. These management tables include employees from different disciplines and are responsible for all decision making that has to do with their respective areas, being sales, customer value, employee value, owner value, and internal services. This study assumes that certain decisions on idea rewarding are made in the old management meetings. This must be reviewed as the model changes. As the study moves to a close, the author is currently acting as idea coordinator and makes reports on ideas collected, their statuses, and gathers ideas that need further discussion and decisions on either implementation, investment or rewarding.

## 5.3. Managerial implications

The objective of this research was to document the process of implementing a new idea collection process in the case company. The research presents the best practices of continuous improvement and a roadmap for setting up a successful idea collection system including

- process map

- selection and setting up a supporting application
- a communication plan for motivating employees and connecting company strategy to idea generation
- rewarding policy
- metrics and KPI's
- training plan

Previous studies show that to succeed in implementing a continuous improvement system, a company needs to see the value in empowering employees in sharing their ideas and improvement suggestions. When employees feel empowered to continuously develop their work processes and company culture, it leads to benefits such as steady growth, motivated employees, and boost in out of the box- thinking and overall innovation culture. Eventually, the company is able to reap benefits in terms of decreased costs and increased sales. The second point is to understand that management commitment is a crucial success factor in creating an innovation culture in a company. The management's responsibility is to create a setting where employees are encouraged to try different things even with the risk of failing and where the time and resources are given to do so. A third key success element is to continuously assess the company strategy and "must win-battles" and to communicate them throughout the organisation and link them to innovation activities and employee engagement. The theory explains that today's most innovative companies invest systematically in innovation, set clear goals for innovation programs as well as well-defined KPI's.

## 5.3 Further research topics

While conducting this research it became clear that it was quite challenging to find information about how to properly benchmark kaizen activities in this type of organization. There was an objective to find out how many improvement suggestions similar companies were expecting to get within a specified amount of time, what the usual and ideal processing times for improvement suggestions is as well as what types of rewards are

usually found to be the most effective. There could in other words be a topic for further research in interviewing some companies within, for instance Vaasa region, about how they are managing their continuous improvement activities, and analysing what the best practices of the industry (or area) are.

In the process of selecting a tool for the CI process it was also evident that there is a desire in the top management to focus even more on innovation on different levels. This project is narrowed down to continuous improvement which includes mainly incremental changes in existing processes and services. It is not to say that the selected tool would not serve the purpose of designing totally new concepts, however it will require additional strategic work from the management to achieve those goals. This realisation would offer further research topics such as how to feed disruptive innovation culture and what are the key driving forces of disruptive innovation.

A third topic of interest came from a senior project executive who has been working on industrial projects for many years. The innovation culture according to them should serve the project organization in a way that would promote and enhance two important areas of improvement in project business – project best practices and lessons learned. Furthermore, the case company operates in many levels in project supply chain (projects often managed by customers) and therefore it would serve both case company's and customers' interests if the best practices and lessons learned could be somehow shared among a society of key customers. How to design the process and how to manage and document the best practices and lessons learned would be a great topic to study.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Rewarding system

**ALOITETOIMINNAN PALKITSEMINEN**

Created by: Nita Päivärinta 28.4.2020

INTERNAL 1 Process number and name

## ALOITETOIMINNAN PALKITSEMINEN PROHOCILLA

**Aloitetoiminnan palkitsemismalli Prohocilla**

Palkitsemistasoja on kolme:

1. 1 kuukausittainen (kuun loppu) ja 1 vuosittainen arvonta (vuoden loppu). Tietty määrä aloitteita jotta saa osallistua. Palkitaan myös osallistumisesta/idean jalostamisesta.
2. Merkittävät innovaatiot (tarvitaan matriisi jossa kriteerit, jotka ovat läpinäkyviä)
3. Spot palkinto (esim rekrypalkkio tai asiakkaan palaute), ideoille joita hankalampi mitata mutta nähdään että on selvästi hyötyä firmalle

Taso 1.:
Kuukauden lopulla **kaikkien kyseisen kuukauden aikana tulleiden ehdotusten välillä jaetaan 1 tai useampi palkinto.** kuitenkin 1 ehdotus per henkilö. Palkinnon arvo on luokkaa 50€ ja se annetaan tavaran tai lahjakortin muodossa (esim. lahjakortti ravintolaan, teatteriin, urheilutapahtumaan.)

Vuoden lopulla suoritetaan toinen arvonta kaikkien kuluneen vuoden aikana tulleiden ehdotusten kesken, kuitenkin per henkilö. Osallistuakseen arvontaan, henkilö on antanut kuluneen kalenterivuoden aikana vähintään X kehitysehdotusta. Palkinnon arvo on luokkaa 500€ (esim matkalahjakortti tai elektroniikkaa). Voidaan antaa palkinnonsaajan valita kahden vaihtoehdon välillä.

Taso 2.:
**Merkittävät innovaatiot** palkitaan, kun hanke on toteutettu, ja todettu että se tuo yritykselle merkittävää rahallista säästöä, lisää liikevaihtoa tai parantaa laatua. Palkitsemisessa käytetään laskukaavaa, jossa idean esittäjä (henkilö tai ryhmä) saa prosentuaalisen summan saavutetusta hyödystä. Kriteeristö tulee olla mahdollisimman läpinäkyvä henkilöstölle.

Taso 3.:
**Spot- palkintoa** käytetään niiden ehdotusten kohdalla, joita on haastavaa rahallisesti mitata, mutta johto katsoo että se tuo silti merkittävää hyötyä (esim rekrypalkkio, asiakkaan palaute, työhyvinvointia tai yrityskulttuuria parantavat ehdotukset). Johtamisen pöytä päättää palkitsemisesta ja kirjaa perustelut.

Taso 4:
Kerran vuodessa voidaan palkita myös Viiman **aktiivisin/aktiivisimmat osallistujat** työkalun pisteytysjärjestelmän ja score boardin perusteella. Palkinnon arvo luokkaa 50€.

**Palkitsemissykli:**
**Kuukausittain** (kuun loppu tai seuraavan alku): Arvonta 1
**Vuosittain** (vuoden loppu, esim joulun alla all hands-meeting tai pikkujoulut): Arvonta 2
**Juoksevasti:** Merkittävät innovaatiot & Spot- palkinnot

Palkitsemiset päätetään Johtamisen pöydissä.

ISO 9001 ISO 14001 ISO 45001 BUREAU VERITAS Certification

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PROHOC EMPOWERING PROJECTS

# Appendix 2. Example of CI- article

**Continuous improvement article**

Created by: Jari Kangasmäki & Nita Päivärinta 23.03.2021

INTERNAL 1 Process number and name

## JATKUVA PARANTAMINEN: IDEASTA TOTEUTUKSEEN

Prohocilla on käytössä jatkuvan parantamisen aloitetoiminta, joka tukee innovointia, ideointia ja kehittämistä omien työtehtävien ja koko työyhteisön hyväksi. Jatkuvan parantamisen työkaluna meillä on käytössä Viima-sovellus. Esittelemme nyt yhden idean matkan alusta toteutukseen saakka.

Teemu Rinne oli ehdottanut ideassaan, että komennukselle lähtevät henkilöt voisivat halutessaan ottaa mukaan oman veriryhmänsä tiedot valmiiksi tulostettuna.

"Idea ajatukselle lähti turvakypärämainoksesta. Kypärän takaosassa oli paikka esim. veriryhmätiedolle, joten mietin miksi meillä ei ole vastaavaa tietoa merkittynä", Teemu kertoo.

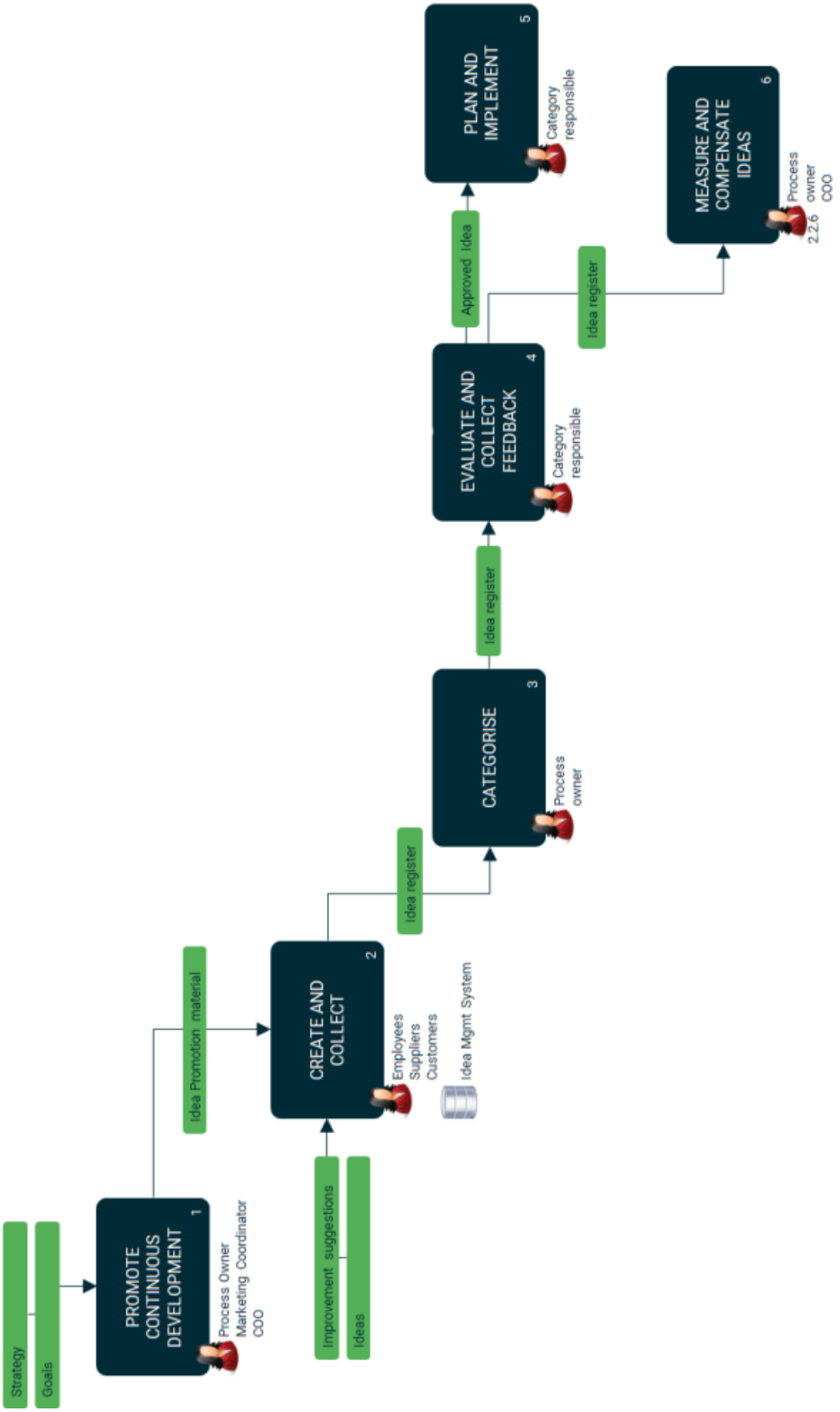
Idea sai kannatusta usealta taholta ja idea todettiin olevan hyödyllinen työterveyteen- ja turvallisuuteen liittyvä toimenpide. Tämän myötä idea siirtyi toteutusvaiheeseen. Toteutustapana on veriryhmätietojen printtaaminen tarraksi Prohocin toimesta. Tarra on helppo ottaa matkalle ja pitää mukana eri tilanteissa. Kun veriryhmä on tiedossa ja tieto nopeasti saatavilla, nopeuttaa se oikeanlaisen hoidon saamisessa mahdollisen onnettomuuden tai muun äkillisen tilanteen sattuessa. Kyseisiä tarroja on jo tulostettu osalle komennukselle lähtevistä eli idea on otettu käytäntöön.

Voit tilata tarroja itsellesi lähettämällä viestin osoitteeseen service@prohoc.fi. Kerro viestissä veriryhmäsi ja minne osoitteeseen tarrat voi lähettää.

Onko sinulla idea tai ajatus meidän toimintamme jatkuvaan parantamiseen liittyen? Jätä ideasi Viima-sovelluksessa. Voit myös kommentoida ja "tykätä" muiden jättämistä ideoista tai ajatuksista.

(Published in intranet)

## Appendix 3. Process map



## Appendix 4. Project stage-gate model