

The A3 is designed to build consensus around improvement strategies and experiments. It is a tool that the team can use to communicate and validate improvement work. A3s also help to direct the implementation of the action plan proposed. The A3 format incorporates PDCA problem-solving process.

Title: _____ **Sponsor:** _____ **Owner:** _____ **Coach:** _____ **Revision:** _____
Team: _____ **Last update:** _____

1. Background: *What problem are you talking about and why?*

- **Identify the basic problem you are talking about, give background context on the problem, and state why this is considered to be a problem.**
 - Quantify the problem, expressing it in terms of the True North plan of the organization – e.g. safety, reliability, satisfaction, performance, cost
 - State a specific time period during which the problem has occurred.
 - Include a benchmark or other comparative value (how serious is this problem?)
 - Illustrate the background statement with A3 visual storytelling tools:

Chart	Current-state value stream map
Stick figures	Sketches
Timeline	

2. Current Conditions: *Where do things stand now?*

- **Illustrate the current conditions with charts or graphs that measure what is going wrong.**
 - What facts and data define the problem (i.e., prove that the problem exists)?
 - Clearly show the current conditions in a visual manner. Consider using charts, graphs, process maps, or other A3 visual storytelling tools.

Write a concise problem statement that uses data in the definition of the problem.

3. Target Conditions (Goals): *What specific outcomes is desired?*

- **Illustrate the target conditions that define what success looks like when the problem has been addressed.**
 - Quantify the target goal, expressing it in terms of the True North plan of the organization
 - Use S.M.A.R.T metrics (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely)
 - State a specific target date for achieving the target
 - State the improvement measurement to be used by saying “as measured by...”
 - Illustrate the target condition statement with A3 visual storytelling tools.

4. Gap Analysis: *Why does the problem exist?*

- **Identify the root causes of the problem. In addition to root causes, discuss any constraints or organizational barriers that must be addressed.**
 - Consider using a gap analysis tool such as 5 Whys or a Fishbone diagram
 - Clearly describe why you are experiencing this problem. What needs to be changed?
 - What constraints or barriers are preventing you from achieving the goals?
 - *Gap analysis must be based on data, e.g. direct observations, surveys, reports*

5. Experiments: *What countermeasures do you propose and why?*

- **What experiments or countermeasures do you propose to address the root causes?**
 - What are the best countermeasures for addressing the gaps and improving performance in the current situation?
 - Give a clear reason why these options are the best. (Consider using a pareto)
 - Consider using best practices in other organizations as useful benchmarks
 - Start with two or three alternatives. Try to include those that impact predisposing, enabling, or reinforcing behaviors
 - *Experiments should be based on ideas from the gemba made by team members who actually do the work*

6. Action Plan: *How will you implement?*

- **Document actions, steps, outcomes, timelines, and roles.**
 - Consider using a Gantt chart or milestone chart
 - **WHAT:** What exactly needs to be done? What will be the main actions?
 - **WHO:** Who will be responsible for what, when, and how much? What support will be required?
 - **WHERE:** Identify where the implementation will take place.
 - **WHEN:** Establish the basic timing for the scheduled items.
 - **HOW:** How will preparations be handled?

7. Study, Reflect, Plan Next Steps: *How will you assure ongoing PDCA?*

- **Commit to regular reviews to study the progress of implementation and make necessary adjustments.**
 - Consider creating a “visibility board” to track progress towards major targets and to confirm milestones in the Gantt chart
 - Here are some questions to think about when you meet at your visibility walls:
 - How will you know if you meet your targets?
 - Did you meet your targets? Do you know why/why not?
 - What processes will you use to enable, assure, and sustain success?
 - How will you share your learnings with other areas?
 - What have you learned? What would you do differently next time?
 - What new problems or unintended consequences have surfaced? What recommendations do you have for others?