



Improving Flow with Value Stream Mapping

A hands-on, three-hour workshop for making work visible, finding systemic constraints, and improving the flow of value.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When work becomes visible, better flow decisions become possible.

In knowledge work, delays are often hidden. Teams can be busy while customers wait, queues grow, handoffs multiply, and problems surface late. This workshop gives participants a shared, practical way to see the system and improve it.

Participants learn to view delivery as a value stream—the end-to-end path from a customer trigger to a valuable outcome. They use Lean thinking and value stream mapping to distinguish active work from waiting, reveal feedback gaps and handoffs, and focus improvement where it will benefit the whole system rather than a single function or individual.

The course supports an **Agile way of thinking and working** by helping people organise around value, learn from the flow of work, and improve collaboratively across boundaries. It connects everyday flow improvement to **business agility**: the ability to sense, respond, and deliver valuable outcomes more quickly and sustainably.

COURSE AT A GLANCE

DURATION

3 hours

STRUCTURE

4 modules

FORMAT

Interactive

OUTPUT

Action-ready

Includes a 15-minute refresh break. Learning outcomes are aligned to the supplied IC-IMPF Improving Flow specification.

MAKE WORK VISIBLE



FIND THE CONSTRAINT



TEST THE CHANGE

BUSINESS BENEFIT

Replace opinion-led process debates with a shared view of how work moves, where it waits, and what small next action can improve time-to-value.



THE EXPERIENCE

Workshop description

This highly participative workshop introduces the principles and practices needed to improve the movement of work through a value stream. It begins with Lean thinking: specify value, identify the value stream, make value flow, enable customer pull, and pursue perfection. The course then applies these ideas through facilitated value stream mapping.

Participants create a current-state view of a real or representative workflow, including the customer, trigger, steps, information and material flow, handoffs, active time, wait time, and percent complete and accurate. The map makes work in process, queues, bottlenecks, feedback, policies, batches, and handoffs visible. It provides a fact base for collaboration and improvement.

Participants then apply the Theory of Constraints and the Seven Wastes of Lean to diagnose why work slows. The course moves from diagnosis to action through the flow accelerators: visualising and limiting WIP, addressing bottlenecks, minimising handoffs and dependencies, accelerating feedback, using smaller batches, reducing queues, protecting focused time, and remediating legacy practices.

Designed for

Professionals who influence how work is delivered across teams or functions, including product, delivery, operations, technical, quality, and team leaders. No specialist Lean or Agile certification is required.

Participants will produce

- A current-state value stream map
- A diagnosis of three systemic constraints
- A small, measurable flow experiment
- A prioritised next action

The workshop progresses through four connected moves**1 • Visualise**

Make the value stream and its delay, dependencies, WIP, and blockers visible.

2 • Diagnose

Use constraints, waste, and flow evidence to understand why work slows.

3 • Experiment

Choose a small, reversible change rather than a broad process redesign.

4 • Sustain

Use measures responsibly, prioritise the action, and build a flow mindset.

CORE MESSAGE

Flow improves through visible work, shared system understanding, and small measurable experiments—not through pressure on individuals.



1

Work Visualization and Flow

CONTEXT

Knowledge work is often complex, making flow and progress difficult to detect and communicate. Visual systems create a shared understanding of how work is moving.

PURPOSE

Build understanding of visualization as a foundation for managing flow and collaboration. Visualization makes overload, delay, dependencies, and blocked work transparent.

WORKSHOP RESPONSE

Participants map a selected value stream and use it to discuss flow as a shared system.

2

Flow Constraints

CONTEXT

Flow can be constrained by a variety of factors that are usually system conditions rather than individual performance problems.

PURPOSE

Develop the ability to diagnose where flow slows and which systemic conditions contribute to delay, including excess WIP, queues, waiting, dependencies, batch size, rework, and context switching.

WORKSHOP RESPONSE

Participants locate constraints and distinguish systemic causes from individual judgements.

3

Flow Improvement

CONTEXT

Flow improves through small, testable changes rather than broad process redesign. Teams need a clear constraint, a reversible intervention, and an early measure of whether the experiment is helping work flow to done.

PURPOSE

Develop the ability to design practical, measurable experiments that improve flow without over-controlling work.

WORKSHOP RESPONSE

Participants turn one constraint into a small experiment, expected effect, and initial check.

4

Ethical Use of Flow Measures

CONTEXT

Flow metrics can support system improvement but become harmful when used as isolated data points or to judge individual performance. Interpretation requires context and attention to what the measure represents. Rising cycle time can reveal growing WIP or a bottleneck at a handoff; using it to rank individual engineers misuses the measure.

PURPOSE

Develop the ability to interpret flow measures constructively and avoid performance-management misuse.

WORKSHOP RESPONSE

Participants use complementary measures and observation, name a misuse to avoid, and focus on system improvement.

OUTCOME-LED DESIGN

Each module contributes directly to the four outcomes: work is made visible, constraints are understood as system conditions, improvements are designed as reversible experiments, and measures are used to learn rather than to rank people.



Course outline

1

Work Visualization and Flow

45 min

SOURCE FOCUS Flow Overview and Accelerating Flow Workshop

Lean thinking and flow: Specify value by product; identify the value stream; make value flow without interruption; let the customer pull value; and pursue perfection.

Value stream foundation: A value stream covers activities from recognising an opportunity through releasing value, including the steps, flow of information and material, and people who develop the solution.

Facilitated mapping: Set the customer, trigger, first and last steps, and workflow scope. Map the current state and expose WIP, queues, bottlenecks, handoffs, feedback, batches, and policies.

Mapping signals: Record active time, wait time, and percent complete and accurate at each step; use the map to begin a conversation about flow efficiency and sources of delay.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION Sketch a current-state value stream for a real or representative product/service flow. Identify where work waits, rework occurs, or a handoff threatens flow.

2

Flow Constraints

45 min

SOURCE FOCUS Flow Overview and Accelerating Flow Workshop

Theory of Constraints: The productivity of the system is limited by its constraint; work accumulates ahead of a bottleneck. Explore scarce expertise, technical debt, unavailable shared services, and missing customer feedback. Consider ways to increase bottleneck capacity or selectively replan around it.

Seven Wastes of Lean: Transportation, inventory, motion, waiting, overproduction, over-processing, and defects. Also consider under-utilised talent, partial work, and unnecessary documentation/process as knowledge-work sources of delay and rework.

Flow accelerators 1-3: Visualise and limit WIP; address bottlenecks; minimise handoffs and dependencies. Make dependencies visible, use WIP limits to balance work against capacity, and encourage incremental execution of dependencies.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION Conduct a constraint-and-waste scan. Identify three systemic flow constraints, explain their impact, and select one for a small experiment.

15-MINUTE REFRESH BREAK · PREPARE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT LAB



Course outline

3

Flow Improvement

30 min

SOURCE FOCUS Accelerating Flow Workshop

Flow accelerators 4-8: Get faster feedback; work in smaller batches; reduce queue lengths; optimise time in the zone; remediate legacy policies and practices.

Practical improvement options: Shift reviews left; engage customers and business owners early and often; use thin, vertical slices; invest in enabling delivery-pipeline work; use short time boxes; direct new work through the backlog; protect focus by improving meetings and keeping WIP low; surface redundant reporting, stage gates, unnecessary documentation, and other legacy practices that impede flow.

Experiment design: Focus on a clear constraint, test a reversible change, define the expected effect, and determine the first signal to inspect.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION Design one small flow experiment: constraint, change, expected effect, first measure, and the people or resources needed to start.

4

Flow Measures

45 min

SOURCE FOCUS Flow Overview and Accelerating Flow Workshop

Six flow measures: Flow distribution, velocity, time, load, efficiency, and predictability. Discuss what each can reveal about the system, including excess WIP, time-to-market delay, imbalance of work types, bottlenecks, and planning variation.

Read the system, not just the number: Use complementary measures. Reduced flow time at the expense of quality is not an improvement. Pair formal measures with direct observation and the story behind the number.

Ethical and sustainable improvement: Measure flow rather than task completion, utilisation, or individual output; organise around value; make flow transparent; and help leaders own improvement. Use an impact/effort matrix to prioritise an action, commit a start point, and identify the support needed.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION Choose one primary and one complementary system-level measure. Name one misuse to avoid, then prioritise and commit to the next improvement action.

Learning approach

Short facilitator inputs, guided mapping, peer discussion, and individual action design. Participants work from a real or representative value stream so outputs can be taken back to the workplace.

Take away

A shared picture of the flow system; a visible constraint; a small experiment; and a responsible way to see whether the change is making delivery better.