



# 200 Tips for Efficiency & Effectiveness

A COLLABORATIVE COLLECTION

---

Institute of Continuous Improvement in Public Services

# 200 Tips for Efficiency & Effectiveness

Dear Reader,

We are delighted to make available to you, **200 Tips for CI Efficiency & Effectiveness**, each one contributed by an ICiPS member.

This book represents knowledge sharing in practice; each tip has helped our member and they have taken the time to share it with you, in the hope that you too may find an idea of value.

So now its your turn; tell others about this book and get them to download a copy. Lets see how many people we can touch with this knowledge.

Watch our counter to find out how well we are doing.

I hope you enjoy.

Debbie Simpson, CEO

**Institute for Continuous Improvement in Public Services**

**May, 2019**

**You can contact us through:**

Email - [info@icips.org](mailto:info@icips.org)

Website - [www.icips.org](http://www.icips.org)

Twitter - @ICiPS

# 200 Tips for Efficiency & Effectiveness

1. Concentrate on breaking patterns of behaviour that prevent improvement
2. Redesign services based on real, not perceived need
3. Talk to people and listen to what they are telling you
4. Adding resource is not the key to improving performance
5. Pinpoint how conditions varied between periods of good and poor performance
6. Don't assume that the best fix can be made by focusing on your area of activity
7. Consider the culture you're working in and involve people on the ground
8. Make as much as possible visible. The lack of visibility of transactions and work in progress in service processes, makes them almost impossible to manage effectively.
9. When you make people wait for a signature just remember that they may have other issues this is impacting on. Do you need to sign it? What value does it give? Can someone else sign?
10. Talk to 10 people before you start your day
11. There are bad processes not bad people. When a problem happens don't ask 'Who is responsible', ask 'What went wrong with our processes to allow this to happen'.
12. Consider if your ICT Equipment enables your staff to be more efficient whilst mobile?
13. Understand the 'As Is' as the first (and critical) part of any change, often it's not what you are told initially. Avoid failures by really understanding what the current customer experience is and the 'triggers' for poor customer experience
14. Make sure you can measure the benefit or change by having a clear baseline
15. No such thing as bad people only bad process. Purpose – Process – People
16. Our Head of QI always says: Don't inspect for quality, build quality into the process
17. 'Questions Lead, Tools Follow'. Don't get caught up in trying to use all the tools in QI, use the tools that work for you.
18. If at first you don't succeed ... well done you tried, now what will you learn from it, and do differently next time?
19. Use the out of office function to manage expectations, how often do you receive an email followed straight away by a call to see if you have read it? Out of office can be used to say I will respond within x number of days
20. Email traffic reflects our activities and relationships. I always recommend separating emails into just a few labelled groups or folders, by sender or topic. Use a few rules to file obvious emails: if person x/topic then move to folder y, then work the rest.

# 200 Tips for Efficiency & Effectiveness

21. I use the GTD (getting things done) method for outlook ... emails are turned in to tasks as soon as they come in (or you spend a few mins doing it in bulk), categorised and given a deadline so your inbox should always be virtually empty

22. Start by understanding the needs of the end user

23. Don't aim for too much at one time

24. Make improvement fun

25. If you are inclusive you stand more chance of delivering something worthwhile

26. Silence = agreement, so speak up!

27. Don't be afraid to ask stupid questions

28. If you can't baseline it, it's hard to see how you have improved it

29. If you are effective, efficiency will have looked after itself (Effectiveness = value delivered efficiently). Focus on value. We need effective public sector organisations.

30. Start by asking people what's wrong with a process then what they like about it. People prefer to moan than to compliment, then it is just the hard bit of getting them to do something about it!

31. Don't forget to improve your improvement approach too

32. Consider if your ICT Equipment enables your staff to be more efficient whilst mobile ?

33. Don't inspect for quality, build quality into the process

34. Stop multi-tasking. Start one thing and do it well, then move on

35. Make a reasonable sized 'To-do' list for the day. Don't start off with a huge list that you know you can't accomplish.

36. Collaborate you achieve far more and far quicker

37. If you are inclusive you stand more chance of delivering something worthwhile

38. Don't be driven by technology, define best process first

39. Ask the hard question about what shows you are failing in achieving your purpose and then work on preventing it

40. Give employees a passport and stamp it if each time they apply a particular tool or technique

41. Focus on how to make things possible

42. Look at the approval steps in your process they are a great place to start when identifying waste. Ask questions like is the approval step adding value and what proportion are getting rejected and why

43. Before you start make sure the process really does need changing

44. Set stretch and cross cutting objectives to get everyone focussed on improvement

# 200 Tips for Efficiency & Effectiveness

45. Always focus on the end goal

46. Encourage people to think that even a small improvement is better than none

47. Eliminating rework really does reduce pressure

***"Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness if doing the right things"***  
***- Peter Drucker***

48. Know what data your organisation holds

49. Get your leadership team on board with CI as soon as you can

50. Don't use meetings to cascade information that could be sent via email

51. See it, Say it, Sort it!

52. Don't be afraid to admit mistakes as this is often where improvements come from

53. Recognise not only success but also effort and it doesn't have to be financial reward, an email or acknowledgement at a team meeting are great motivators

54. Town Hall meetings are a great way to share ideas top down and bottom up

55. Simplest trick of all – organise your IT folders and contents; I bet you won't recall half of what is in them!

56. When you recruit people make sure they are already bought into CI as a way of working

57. Don't use more tools than you need to – use the right ones to answer the question to hand

58. There are loads of resources on line you can learn from

59. I think a great idea is the information library that NHSBT have put in place to share knowledge

60. Have a CI wall in a walk-through areas, to showcase improvements

61. As you gather information for your improvement, note where you got it from and where you see duplications or more than one version of the truth and then report it back to ensure it is addressed as very often we just take the data and overlook this 'on-the-side' improvement opportunity

62. Make sure new technology can talk to each other or you will end up with a manual process in between and it does happen

63. Poor data = poor improvements

64. Put people front left and centre of all you do

65. Simple but effective tip; check if people are following the same and most current process; very often they aren't

66. I love team information boards and we make ours fun as well as factual

67. If you don't manage to secure a senior sponsor for a significant piece of change you know you are going to have problems

# 200 Tips for Efficiency & Effectiveness

68. Make improvement as important as health and safety or GDPR – in other words – make time for it and commit to it

69. I suggest using RACI for all processes and projects as it is a great way to make sure everyone is clear on expectations

70. Build alliances to help convey your ideas and build critical mass of support for action

71. To pick up on ideas for improvement be strong on listening and light on speaking

72. Just one rotten apple can throw your whole culture or project off course, so be sure to look out for them and take action when you find them

73. Have a do not disturb or do disturb flag on the desk to manage interruptions in a polite and fun way; interruptions eat time

74. ICiPS data base has lots of case studies and things on it

75. Spend some time working as part of the process and you will be amazed what improvement opportunities you see as a newcomer

76. Find a way to let people provide their improvement opportunities anonymously as sometimes they don't feel comfortable putting their name to things

77. I logged how I spent my time once and was amazed as it showed how much time I wasted when I had always believed I was super-efficient, I have thought about this automatically ever since

78. The level of toil can be a good indicator of efficiency

79. Don't believe someone is an expert just because they are in a certain role – don't be afraid to challenge and question

80. There are some good resources online from the USA who are big into CI

81. Listen to what your customers have to say to make sure their needs are met through any changes

82. Don't cc people into emails just in case , it is infuriating and wastes time and also say 'thanks in advance' so you don't have to send a second email to say thank you which takes you time to write and someone else's time to read

83. Never think you know it all, because no one does

84. I use the partnership index when trying to see how well we work with others and it lets you understand in more depth the relationship and how it can be improved

85. A thought – does CI drive technology or technology drive CI? Either way can't wait to see what opportunities AI presents

86. We have a creative thinking area that is brightly coloured and with comfy seats, we use this for creative thinking sessions and sometimes just for team meetings as team members seem to be more relaxed and happy to contribute

87. Meet and talk to as many people as you can that are involved in the process of which you are a part

# 200 Tips for Efficiency & Effectiveness

88. Try to make processes simpler and avoid adding extra complexity

89. Take it in turns to have a good idea of the week so everyone gets involved

90. Strategically place large sheets of paper on the wall with a pen nearby so people can write down ideas, concerns, things they think could be done better etc

***"Simplicity is the soul of efficiency"***  
***- Austin Freeman***

91. If someone is off for a period of time, observe the work-arounds employees use to keep delivery on track. process works and this may give you a clue about how it could work better long term

92. Hot-desking is a great way to help people to get to know each other, what they do and also understand any process problems they have

93. Hold people to account for improvement

94. Look at things as if you had never seen them before and ask why?

95. Give everyone the knowledge of tools that can help them to analyse root cause and find a solution

96. Many bad decisions are based on bad information

97. Use innovation sprints to encourage collaborative innovation

98. Take as much time recording what doesn't work as what does ( KPIs etc ) as remedying what doesn't work will save time long term

99. Take a leaf out of RNLI book and don't be afraid to start your approach again from scratch and have a focus on prevention

100. Use the lean walk devised by Land Registry to make CI real for people, it is great fun to do and no cost apart from time

101. Don't ever let employees think that an improvement project means that is job done as CI means it will always need another look and another improve

102. If you are new to CI it may seem like a mountain to climb so present and approach it in bite size chunks that allow people to get it and get on board

103. Embed CI in the way the organisation works that way when CI leads move on the ethos doesn't disappear with them

104. Set the improvement goals with the team rather than telling them what the goal is

105. We try to involve every team member in change at some stage rather than have one fixed change team as it makes people feel involved and valued as well as training them on tools

106. Use visual management it really works

107. Check you are using data that is accurate rather than accept what you are given

# 200 Tips for Efficiency & Effectiveness

108. The hardest thing is to get people to appreciate that CI is necessary, I haven't a solution but I think just to accept this, means you know you are not alone in this struggle

109. See if you can get the senior team to adopt a measure around improvement to keep the entire workforce focussed on this

110. Bring in an outsider as they often see things that people working day to day on the process don't

111. Don't automate a flawed process as it will still be flawed

112. A lot of waste is when people keep their own records as a comfort blanket, if you can find out who is doing this and why you can work with them to give them what they need in order to stop it

113. Before you start a piece of change set up a way for employees to contribute their ideas about why the process needs to be improved such as a survey

114. Get your senior leader to do a webcam to kick off a large piece of change

115. Use PDP's to set improvement goals with staff so it becomes part of their job

116. Go to network groups so you can meet people who share your pain and can offer you advice

117. If you use third party suppliers have an improvement requirement in the contract so there is an expectation to collaborate on improvement

118. Don't be a tool head, sometimes the solution requires nothing more than common sense

119. If you want employees to engage you have to give them an easy route to do so and make sure you show appreciation for all ideas

120. Set up peer-to-peer support groups

121. Have a creative corner, it doesn't have to be large but just brightly coloured and a place that helps people and teams to think differently

122. Always ask yourself if it is a management problem rather than a process problem

123. Give the team a challenge to solve and as see what ideas they come back with

124. If you stop a change that isn't working it can show people that it is OK to try but fail

125. Start implementing CI with a small change that shows it works then shout about the benefits

126. Make sure you measure and communicate the benefits to gain peoples interest and belief in CI

127. Write down every piece of information and every idea you collect when looking at a process as very often you won't know you need it until you find you haven't got it

128. Never believe that everything is as impossible to change as people tell you

129. The DMAIC framework is a great tool to use to guide you through a change project even if you use it broadly

130. Use statistical analysis software to save you loads of time analysing data



# 200 Tips for Efficiency & Effectiveness

131. The team can make or break a project so invest time to make sure you have a balance of people who know about the process and people at different hierarchies

132. Develop an in-house tool kit that all employees can access

133. If you leaders don't get CI then no-one else will and it is best to temper your ambition accordingly

134. If you come from a large organisation find out who else is doing CI and try to share ideas and knowledge

135. You can't tell if you are succeeding with CI unless you use some sort of benchmark , Public Sector Scorecard, EFQM, Balanced scorecard and the ICIPS assessment are all things you could use

136. Don't just change a part of the system as you may just pass a problem down line

137. Team information boards make it standard practice to talk about improvement and to make time to do it but make the majority of the discussion forward focussed rather than dwelling on the past

138. Sticking plaster solutions aren't an improvement just a crutch

139. New members of staff often have a different outlook and the enthusiasm to move improvements forward

140. Work with your comms team to make sure improvement language is embedded in every activity

141. There are more than 200 top tips for improvement so no excuse not to do it!

142. Have a waste challenge day where teams compete to identify the most waste

143. Be careful when you embed a new process that you don't do things that make people work to a certain level of performance when they could be exceeding it

144. If you are measuring a process you have to do all shifts or your conclusions will be flawed

145. Top down and bottom up approach to improvement is more likely to work

146. Be honest about what you are looking to achieve and call your activity what it is, so don't say it is continuous improvement if what you really want to do is to do a one off quick and dirty program of change to meet a budget cut

147. Control charts on the wall are a quick and easy way to help everyone understand performance, but you can link it up to technology to flash up real time information

148. If your CI efforts have stalled then treat like you would any other problem by asking why and then starting again with baby steps

149. Get people to engage in improvement by helping them to see it as a self-development opportunity

150. Have an internal annual conference to talk about and recognise peoples successes

# 200 Tips for Efficiency & Effectiveness

151. Use reverse brainstorming and it usually gets great results as it forces people to think about things from a completely different angle and you don't need any experience or knowledge to take part

152. There are many published papers that give approaches to measuring citizen value and this can be important with public sector change but is often overlooked

***"Speed and efficiency do not always increase  
the quality of life"  
- Robert Fulghum***

153. Think starting out with continuous improvement like an egg timer, although participation and benefits will filter through slowly, the benefits and momentum the other side will start to build

154. Don't get overwhelmed by the thought of introducing CI across an organisation, break the task up into bite size chunks

155. To get people engaged make sure you have identified what benefits are in it for them

156. Keep the approach proportionate to the size of problem at hand

157. You are not an island

158. I don't know what the answer is but it can be very hard to get people to understand any idea or thought is valuable no matter how small, but it may help others to know I find this a common problem

159. Site visits to other organisations have been a great way to see things differently and learn new things

160. The easiest thing to get people to do is 5s as it is quick, easy and sustainable, works every time

161. Leading continuous improvement is as much about psychology as knowledge of lean

162. Improvements should only be done if the benefits outweigh the investment and so sizeable gains should be the goal, but don't over promise as if you don't succeed everyone will simply say you failed to deliver and then people pull back

163. If you struggle to get management on board try and understand why and also what could motivate them to be more interested; usually it will be helping them achieve their goals

164. If people aren't on board because they say they haven't got time, either make sure change is part and parcel of their day job or look at how much time they spend on set up, extended desk and coffee room chats, web browsing and it is amazing how much this time totals up over a day, or ask them to make 15 minutes at the end of the morning or day so it is a short but defined space that just requires them to stop what they are doing slightly earlier

165. Don't treat all change in the same way because there is a big difference between how you approach transformation for example as day to day improvements

166. Use an ideas tree for people to put up and make visible their ideas for change in a non-threatening way

# 200 Tips for Efficiency & Effectiveness

167. Sometimes the smallest changes can make the biggest impact such as repeated mistakes that need to get sorted either because the customer has sent something in wrong or it has been handled incorrectly internally. If these things are prevented it can make everyone's life better

168. Include back office services in change as very often they are overlooked and also include the change team as they don't always practice what they preach

169. Make sure your organisations purpose and values are clearly articulated before you start trying to embed continuous improvement

170. Don't always think that you will get better results by bringing in outsiders to improve processes as they will only draw on the existing workforce anyway, if you have an internal person who is a good facilitator with change tool knowledge

171. Don't baffle employees with change jargon as it may alienate them and make them think it is more complicated than it really is, make the subject and any tools real in their language

172. Build a group of change ambassadors who can help you spread the word about the benefits of CI and maybe support with some advice and guidance. Pick people for their behavioural traits and personal interest as much as for their knowledge of improvement as that can be picked up

173. Set up an office forum where you can start to discuss change and ideas for change and make it sound exciting so people feel they are losing out if they don't become a part of it. Can be good for multi-site locations

174. If you are looking at what needs improving you could look at audit and risk reports and minutes of board meeting where often problems are highlighted but not treated within part of an improvement programme

175. Make sure your change program is aligned to the strategic delivery plan and that way people can see how any changes made contribute to the overall goals

176. Use change projects as a way to train people

177. Work with a finance professional to agree how and when you will measure the benefits of change as they understand when a benefit can be considered to be banked and how to calculate the size of benefit

178. If a change project is likely to result in freeing up jobs or time then have a sound plan up front about the impact on employees, so are you going to re-deploy them or make them redundant or give them new tasks. This will help you manage the situation

179. If job losses are going to happen as a result of change it can be hard to get people to engage in the process however you can position their engagement to provide a development opportunity that could help them find alternative work

180. Don't take at face value anything someone tells you about their work when designing a process map as usually they forget to mention work arounds and rework, they just give you the process as it should be done in a perfect world

181. Focus on the right things; know what it is that will really make a difference to the end user as well as employees

# 200 Tips for Efficiency & Effectiveness

182. Be mindful of internal politics as sometimes your change work will show a different picture of the organisation as is being portrayed in glossed up reports

183. Also, be aware of external politics which will pull your organisation in different directions at a whim, so try and be aware of what is bubbling away in the background

184. Have a proper and informed plan of action when implementing continuous improvement as knee jerk change is just bad

185. You can't beat a lot of hands on experience when looking for a CI lead

186. Help employees to understand that tools are just that and it doesn't help to try and shoehorn every tool into solve a problem or to always have to follow an approach such as lean or six-sigma. Sometimes one tool will do the job, it is about using the right tool for the job

187. Make improvement the new norm

188. Identify leaders who can remove blockers and support your change initiative and get them on board from the start

189. If you have a comms team work with them to roll out your CI plan as they can make sure the messages are conveyed in the best way and continue to reinforce key messages that will help CI become the norm

190. When rolling out your improvement strategy it can also help to sell it if you state all the benefits; improved employee engagement, finance, up-skilling and career prospects with wider knowledge etc

191. Always consider the barriers you will face such as knowledge or scale or the pace of the environment and then develop a plan about how you can overcome them

192. Don't assume your efforts to introduce CI will always work first time, you may need to try different approaches

193. When you start out with CI and then periodically, go for quick wins so people can see the benefits

194. Find a way to share lessons with you colleagues

195. 'Go see' is a brilliant, quick and easy thing that anyone can do

196. Don't get sucked in to trying to fulfil every role in a project yourself, as the lead you should be leading and adding expertise and objectivity

197. The more CI you do the more similar situations you will start to recognise, but don't let this lead you to replicate the solution unless the context is the same

198. Showing that peoples efforts are making a difference is one of the biggest motivators

199. Have early meetings with senior stakeholders and keep them on board from the start

200. Leave it to someone else - ha ha!

*Thank you to everyone who contributed to this ebook, including our loyal Twitter followers! We are indebted to you for your expertise and wisdom. #CI*