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### **Benchmarking Tip:**

#### **Choose A Broad-And-Shallow Or Narrow-And-Deep Scope**

Teams often choose to do a study that is broad-and-deep, that is, one that broadly covers a large process from beginning to end and goes into great depth in every aspect of that process. This is too much. Instead, a team needs to choose one of the following:

##### **Broad-And-Shallow**

This type of study spans many functions or processes, and doesn't go into detail in any one area. It answers the question "What is done?" rather than "How is it done?" High-level, strategic questions are asked, such as:

- What are the comparative costs of executing a similar process?
- What is a company's business strategy?
- What is the most effective organizational structure for a given function?

Broad-and-shallow studies are useful in developing strategies, setting goals, and reorganizing functions to be more effective.

##### **Narrow-And-Deep**

The kind of data collected in this type of study is very detailed. It delves into one or two aspects of a process or function and looks at how work is done. Operational-level questions are asked, such as:

- How are data automatically collected for the software development process?
- How does an organization exceed customer expectations in providing on-time delivery?
- How does a company decide what products to bring to market?

Narrow-and-deep studies are useful in changing how people do their work, namely the processes they use to perform their jobs.

Choosing the scope of a benchmarking study is vital to success. A rule of thumb is, if a team wants how-to information, it will eventually have to dig deep.

#### **COMPANIES MUST MAKE IT THEIR GOAL TO RETAIN CUSTOMERS FOR LIFE**

Lifetime customers are not only a continuous source of income, they are also worth all the sales a company makes from customer referrals. Companies should strive for a relationship with customers in which their customers are so excited about their product that they are willing to talk positively about it, and the company, to other people. When customers are loyal to your product, they are willing to put their own reputations on the line.

## **A Worker's Mind Is A Terrible Thing To Waste**

Many companies underestimate or ignore the need for improving the critical thinking skills of factory workers. Thinking skills enable workers to tap into their own wealth of specialized knowledge -- knowledge that is essential to quality improvement efforts.

The heart of these critical thinking skills is effective problem solving. While many managers believe they and their workers are good at solving problems, in reality, they are often skilled at fixing the same problems over and over again, or at shotgun problem solving, random fixes that are put in until a problem appears to go away.

These approaches are bandages at best and usually provide no permanent solutions. Analytical skills and a structured approach are needed to systematically eliminate root causes of many problems encountered in a typical manufacturing facility. Workers can make substantial contributions when given critical thinking tools and authority to use them.

Continuous quality improvement requires a set of critical thinking tools and management techniques that:

- joins statistical process control (SPC) techniques with critical thinking skills so that the data collected through SPC can be analyzed logically to identify root causes and corrective action
- offers a disciplined process of deductive reasoning that is easily taught to workers regardless of background or education level
- is organized to remove causes, not just adapt to effects
- relies on a system for testing root-cause hypotheses prior to corrective action
- is driven by the active involvement of hourly personnel and management