

Process flow may be at risk for many reasons. It could be because we have fragile processes, because the act of making our processes Lean has, to some extent resulted in fragility. It may be because of layout of the process, it may be issues with suppliers or customers, it may be about quality issues, or it may be people issues, such as skill shortages.



Fragile Process

Lean may produce fragile processes by moving to smaller batch sizes or single piece flow, because there are less jobs in the process to work on, in case for any reason we can't work on a particular job, say due to quality problems.

- Lean may create fragile processes by reducing waste i.e. smaller batches, less inventory, just-in-time delivery
- More sensitive to disrupted flow
- Do we need to be agile?
- Reduce changeovers/set-ups

Layout

The physical layout of the process is a major issue in relation to continuous flow, and many are not designed adequately. In relation to manufacturing processes, layout may be an issue, but it's even more true in transactional processes. And in these, location based on keeping functional specialisms, such as Finance people, together may mean that people working consecutively in a process may be geographically separated, so that physical documents need to be moved a long way between them.

- Identify objectives - try to quantify
- Identify product families or service
- Map/understand the process routes
- Develop an initial layout
- Optimise the layout