How Do Visual Tools Help Improvement?

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the importance in improvement work of appreciating systems.
- Describe how visual tools can aid improvement.
- List at least two visual tools that can help you visualize a system.

Description: Appreciation of systems is fundamental to the science of improvement. But when you’re a frontline worker with a close-up view of one part of the health system, it can be hard to see the big picture. In this video short from Lloyd Provost, co-author of the legendary Improvement Guide, you’ll learn how visual tools can help reveal the larger systems in which we live and work.

Watch the video at https://youtu.be/-NoEoqoCdpw or read the transcript.

Discussion Questions

1. When embarking on health care improvement, why is it so important to see and appreciate the full complexity of a system?
2. How have you used visual tools, such as run charts or flowcharts, to help with improvement? (If you haven’t used these tools, how do you think they could help you?)
3. In the video, Provost talks about getting “bogged down” by overusing improvement tools. Why do you think he warns against this?
4. Extra credit: Practice using a visual tool to depict a system you’d like to improve in your personal life. Refer to IHI’s Quality Improvement Essentials Toolkit (http://www.ihi.org/resources/Pages/Tools/Quality-Improvement-Essentials-Toolkit.aspx) for help.