How Long Should a PDSA Cycle Last?

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the importance of setting an end date for a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle.
- Describe methods to determine an appropriate timeline for a PDSA test cycle.

Description: What’s one of the biggest mistakes people make in their improvement work? Lloyd Provost, co-author of the legendary Improvement Guide, says that in his experience coaching teams, it’s that people don’t put an end date for their PDSAs. PDSAs are rapid tests of change, and timelines are important to keep things on pace. But how “rapid” are we talking? What is a good timeline? Provost shares his advice in this Open School video short.

Watch the video at https://youtu.be/cWGslQ-K6cm or read the transcript.

Discussion Questions

1. Provost talks about the importance of having an end date for a PDSA cycle. What reasons does he give? Can you think of other reasons why this would be important?

2. In general, how do you work differently when you have an end date, or a deadline, for a project compared to when you do not? Give some examples.

3. Provost shares some techniques he uses to set appropriate end dates. What criteria do you use for setting deadlines for yourself or others?