5 Principles of Lean

LEAN thinking is the belief that there is a simpler, better, easier way to complete our work.

1) Voice of the Customer
Identify who your customer is and identify value from their perspective. Typically, a value-added activity must meet three criteria:
- It is something the customer would be willing to pay for, if they had to
- It is something “physical” done to change the product or service
- It is something done correctly the first time, without need for re-work

2) Understand your Process
Process mapping allows you to have a picture of your process so you can begin making improvements. Without it, it is difficult to have transparency and see where the problems are. It also helps the team gain an understanding of everyone’s role in the process. There are five different types of process maps—you do not need to do all of them, just the ones that help you understand the process.

3) Create Flow
A process “flows” from person to person, department to department, or facility to facility. Flow is about moving people or product through a service process—one at a time, without stopping or waiting.

4) Establish Pull
Many of our processes are pushed or “given” to the next user. This creates many forms of waste in many cases the next area or person may not be ready causing inventory and backlogs. This is the very reason we have so many waiting rooms or holding areas. Having a system of pull means you only supply what the customer wants, when they want it.

5) Pursue Excellence
Lean thinking is rooted in the continuous quality improvement philosophy. Lean is not a one-time event but rather a journey to continually improve our processes and always strive to supply the customer with value, from their perspective.

Everything we do under the Lean umbrella should always answer any or all of these principles.