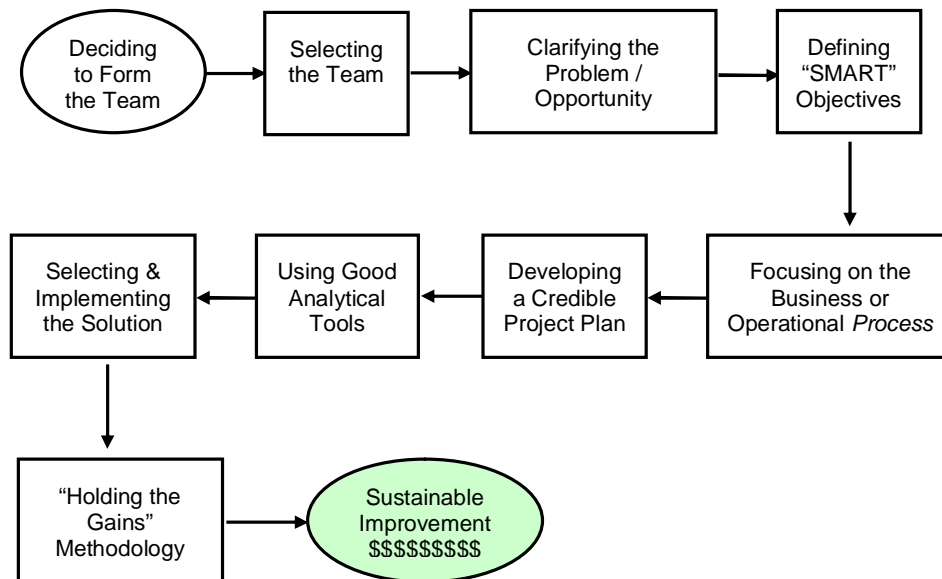


## Why Don't Continuous Improvement Processes Really Continually Improve Performance?

(Author: Gary Nader, Principal Consultant – Total Quality Associates)

Far too often improvement efforts don't really improve or if they do, they fail to hold the gains - Why? The simple answer is that the improvement process being used is flawed ... It may be somewhat flawed or very flawed. So what is an improvement process that *will really improve performance in a sustainable way*? Below is a diagram that outlines the steps for a successful improvement process:



There are so many stories of failed improvement efforts. Sometimes it can be seen from the start and other times it is seen in the "rear view mirror"! What are warning signs? Well, here are a few:

- ✓ Lack of real interest by senior leaders.
- ✓ No clear connectivity to business impact.
- ✓ A non-leader, "leader".
- ✓ Team members feeling they lack the needed knowledge and/or resources.
- ✓ Chaos among team members – "What are we doing?, Why are we doing it? What is the roadmap? Have we got to the goal line yet?"
- ✓ Lack of objective data to support conclusions.
- ✓ Multiple efforts to implement a "solution". Ready-Fire-Aim; or worse ... Fire-Fire-Fire!
- ✓ No signs that an improvement effort occurred after a few months have passed.

Every one of the steps in the above process has several important success factors. Understanding and effectively dealing with these can make or break your company's continuous improvement efforts. Regarding sustainability ... Even if every step is well executed *except* "Holding the Gains", non-sustainability is virtually assured. Unfortunately, this is often the most overlooked step in the process!

If you would like more information about this subject or help with your continuous improvement process, please contact [gjnader@totalqualityassociates.org](mailto:gjnader@totalqualityassociates.org) or checkout our website at [www.totalqualityassociates.org](http://www.totalqualityassociates.org)