Value Stream Mapping: How to Visualize Work and Align Leadership for Organizational Transformation
Karen Martin & Mike Osterling

In Luther's doctrines of divine providence and vocation, he sees all creation in service to God as His instruments to bring about His purpose everywhere. We can think of all the world's finest inventions, like the printing press, as masks of God (larva Dei); that is, instruments created by God to be a blessing to us and our neighbor. Value Stream Mapping (VSM) can be classified within this realm, a blessing from God. Over the last several decades, value stream theory has been used throughout the world by thousands of organizations (from Fortune 100 companies to mom and pop companies, from manufacturing to knowledge- and information-based companies) primarily to improve customer services. The authors envision VSM providing simple visual aids of an organization's current and ideal states and delivering an invaluable high level strategic and transformational plan to organizations - far more than just a process improvement tool. This paper will briefly describe VSM and consider how VSM can be used to improve strategic planning and process delivery systems (strategic deployment) for the promotion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in church and school ministries.

I.   VSM General Overview

The authors, Karen Martin and Mike Osterling, believe value stream thinking is critical to an organization's ability to deliver high quality services effectively (rate of speed) and efficiently (cost of service). They estimate, "Without it, organizations fail to develop customer-centric processes and fail to organize in a way that best serves the very reason they exist."[1] Such an assertion should make every church and school take pause. Like many improvement theories for pastoral leadership, worship service design, homiletics, classroom management, curriculum development, time-management and the like, VSM thinking requires a view from the balcony. The authors assert, "Value stream mapping is a practical and highly effective way to *learn to see* and resolve disconnects, redundancies, and gaps in how work gets done."[2] The authors maintain the work does not belong to one individual but to leaders and members from cross-functional teams. They recommend VSM is "a team-based methodology that we believe is the foundation of a proven management practice."[3]

VSM has its roots in *Lean* philosophy ("Lean" Thinking). Lean Thinking promotes "continuous improvement executed through defining value from the customer's perspective."[4] The term "Lean" was coined by John Krafcik in a 1988 study on how Toyota operated and with an

---

[1] Karen Martin & Mike Osterling, "Value Stream Mapping", (McGraw-Hill Education, 2014) xi.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Karen Martin, "Lean Terminology," (The Karen Martin Group, 2014.), 6.

DM9742 – CONGREGATIONAL ANALYSIS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

emphasis on eliminating waste.[5] The authors note, "Lean Thinking framed Toyota's philosophical and operational bias around five key principles – value, the value stream, flow, pull, and perfection."[6] The term "value stream" was developed in the book that launched the Lean movement, "The Machine that Changed the World (1990)."

A value stream is the sequence of activities an organization undertakes to deliver on a customer request. The authors maintain value stream is the "most powerful metric we've seen for analyzing process in office, service and knowledge work environments: percent complete and accurate (%C&A)."[7] The authors observed in the early years that not enough attention was given to "people based transformation,"[8]noting the hidden key of value stream mapping is the "holistic view of how work flows through entire systems."[9]

The authors assert five key benefits of value stream mapping: **First**, value stream maps provide an effective means to establish a strategic direction for making improvements. **Second**, value stream maps provide a highly visual, full-cycle view – a storyboard – of how work progresses from a request to fulfilling that request. **Third**, value stream mapping deepens organizational understanding about the work systems that deliver value to customers, aiding in better decision making and work design. **Fourth**, the quantitative nature of value stream maps provides the foundation for data-driven, strategic decision making. **Fifth**, value stream maps reflect work flow as a customer experiences it versus the internal focus of typical process-level maps.[10]

Much of the work in churches and schools is knowledge- and relationship-based and, therefore, not readily visible or quantifiable. The authors observe, "The ability to visualize non-visible work is an essential first step in gaining clarity about and consensus around how work gets done."[11] The authors list other benefits of value stream mapping that may be attractive to churches and schools, such as improved connections to customers ("members and students"), holistic systems-thinking methodologies, simplification tools, practical means to drive continuous improvement, and effective means to orient new hires ("new members and students").

I.   **VSM Planning and Implementation Phases**

Another paper (or two) would be necessary to provide a sufficient overview of the mapping activity. I will not attempt to summarize chapters 3-6, but will simply recommend them to the VSM facilitator and VSM champion to read prior to scheduling and preparing for a mapping activity. It is enough to know these chapters provide the foundation to strategic planning,

---

[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., 5.
[7] Ibid., xii.
[8] Ibid., 6 – 7.
[9] Ibid. 7.
[10] Ibid. 8 – 9.
[11] Ibid., 12.

organization wide unification, service improvements, and customer ("member") centered value. Chapters 3-6 also describe how to create the current and future state VSM, develop and execute a value stream Transformation Plan, and achieve and sustain the transformation.

II.   The need for VSM in Church and School Ministry

Martins and Osterling observe most organizations are unaware of how their delivering systems function from start to finish. They note, "In many cases, organizations have never studied the way they work all the way from an initial customer request to delivering on that request."[12] In many churches and schools, there are only a few people (possibly only the pastor) who can describe all the ministry processes from start to finish and all the supporting activities and persons; that is, how the weekly worship service cycle is planned and completed, a visitor and members are assimilated, an annual Bible study or small group ministry program is developed and delivered, a new student is recruited and receives Christian education, and so on.

The authors assert, "The lack of understanding about how work flows – or, more commonly doesn't flow – across a work system that's sole purpose is to deliver value to a customer is a fundamental problem that results in **poor performance, poor business decisions, and poor work environments**."[13] In the same way many churches lack of understanding about ministry work flows across ministries whose sole purpose is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The brokenness in the world is seen also in the inability of churches and schools to function well and in Christian love. In good faith, many congregations have introduced varying styles of worship without contemplating the overall cost to deliver a quality service. Many churches and schools are beleaguered by redundancies, unnecessary complications, and financial disconnects. The authors add, "Significant time and money is wasted when organizations attempt to make improvement without a clearly defined, externally focused improvement strategy that places the customer in the center."[14]

As congregational ministries mature and become more complex, or resources (financial and space) become scarce, there is a tendency to drift into a series of functional silos and even tribal communities. Many churches with school ministries or multiple worship services and styles struggle to provide a unity of message and purpose. Blame is too often assigned to ministries and/or people rather than considering the problem may be in the organizational structure and process or the "mapping" design. The authors caution, "Conflicting priorities, interdepartmental tension, and – in the worse cases – infighting within leadership teams are common outcomes when a company attempts to operate without a clear understanding about how an organization's various parts fit together and how value is delivered to its customers."[15]

---

[12] Ibid., 29.
[13] Ibid., 2.
[14] Ibid., 2.
[15] Ibid., 2.

III.   VSM in the Intentional Interim Ministry

Mapping the IIM process and using the iGrafx Flowcharter may enhance my ministry to congregations in transition. The authors suggest, "If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, you don't know what you are doing."[16] The mapping activities could include the worship service, visitation, governance, small group ministries and Bible studies, Christian education, assimilation, finance and technology. The key will be to identify and plan for the appropriate family groups, develop and socialize the charter.

IV.   Theological and Personal Reflections

Approaches like VSM, with an emphasis on metrics, timeline, cost, and percent of accuracy, can be resisted on the face as impersonal and unchristian. However, such an approach may reveal how to better care for souls. Since the church does not have the option to "cull the book" for ideal clients, the only alternative is to improve its ministry processes to members in order to feed the sheep.

Luther makes a threefold provisional observation in his Large Catechism: first, "God gives us all that we have," "makes all creation help provide the comforts and necessities of life" and "gives all temporal blessings."[17] Again Luther says, "Everything we possess, and everything in heaven and on earth besides, is daily given and sustained by God" - hiding in the ordinary social functions and stations of life, caring for the human race through the work of other human beings. Luther concludes, "[we are] to devote all these things to his service."[18] All too often, church people overlook the many blessings of God in creation to promote the gospel and for the benefit of their neighbor. Luther says, "The work is finished and completed, Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by his sufferings, death, and resurrection, etc. But if the work remained hidden and no one knew of it, it would have been all in vain, all lost."[19] For these reasons VSM may be used well, and with a good conscience, understanding the fact-based "bigger picture" of improving both congregational and Intentional Interim Ministries.

---

[16] Ibid., 15.
[17] Luther's Large Catechism, (Book of Concord, 1959.), 412.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 415.

Value Stream Mapping is a practical, how-to guide that helps decision-makers improve value stream efficiency in virtually any setting, including construction, energy, financial service, government, healthcare, R&D, retail, and technology. It gives you the tools to address a wider range of important VSM issues than any other such book, including the psychology of change, leadership, creating teams, building consensus, and charter development. In a continuous improvement leadership role for six years, Mike played a key role in Square D Company's lean transformation in the 1990s. Categories: Business\\Management. PRAISE FOR VALUE STREAM MAPPING "Value stream mapping is often misunderstood and underutilized.