

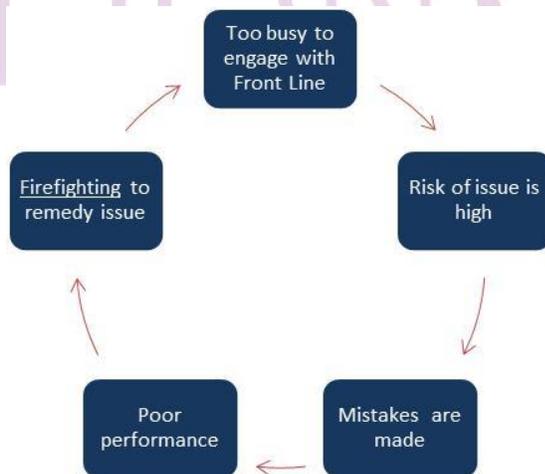
Managers' Role in Continuous Improvement

"An organization seeking excellence should identify and address problems before they become fires."

Is your Managers' time consumed by meetings, emails and 'firefighting'? How often are Managers in the field with their direct reports? Do Managers have time to address the most strategically important issues?

Companies often reward those employees who are the best problem solvers under pressure, the fire fighters? Unfortunately, those same people are promoted to Management where they further refine their skills as firefighters. Today, Management is overwhelmed with meetings, emails and firefighting. There is far too little time to run the business, improve the business or develop direct reports. As a result, small problems are over looked in the hope that they go away (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Firefighting Doom Loop



Now imagine a world where opportunities and issues are addressed when they are

small, often by front line employees. Results are more reliable and there is more time for strategic initiatives and improvement. This is truly the scenario of organizational excellence.

Getting to this future world requires discipline and extra work in the short-term to clear up the back log of issues. How does one get there...?

Free Up Management Time: Our inclusive culture results in invitations to meeting of limited value and a high volume of emails. Resist the tendency to be involved in everything or respond to all emails. Manager's time is critical.

Be Deliberate in Making Time at the Front Line: Managers need to manage the processes they oversee. That means spending time walking the process and engaging the workforce in identifying issues early. Schedule time every week to be in the field, don't let Outlook schedule you.

Coach Employees in Problem Solving: The best problems are the ones that are solved by the employees doing the work. Develop their skills and empower them.

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