

**Process Improvement Café Overview**

The Process Improvement Café is a short blended learning experience oriented around the concepts and skills found in the Harvard ManageMentor Process Improvement topic. The Process Improvement topic will help managers:

* *Plan a business process improvement*
* *Analyze a business process*
* *Redesign a business process*
* *Implement a redesigned business process*
* *Continually measure, monitor, and adjust a business process*

The learning experience has three components:

*60 to 90 minutes 60 minutes Ongoing*

Part 1: Pre-work (self-paced, individual)

Before the live Café session, participants are expected to complete the following assignments:

* Review the following online lessons from the Harvard ManageMentor Process Improvement topic:
  + Understand Business Process Improvement
  + Plan a Process Improvement
  + Analyze the Process
  + Redesign the Process
  + Implement the New Process
  + Continually Improve the Process
* Complete the online assessment from the Harvard ManageMentor Process Improvement topic
* Complete the Practice Activity “Create a Map and Identify Problems” in Lesson 3 in the Harvard ManageMentor Process Improvement topic and have the results available for the discussion.
  + This activity is most applicable to a general audience, i.e., those who may not have been tasked yet with a specific business process improvement (BPI) for their organization. If, however, the group is initiating a specific BPI project, a different activity, the “Worksheet for Planning a Process Improvement,” may be a more beneficial assignment. A facilitator would need to adjust the discussion discussions throughout the Café, if taking this approach.

Part 2: Café session (live, group)

The Café session represents the core element of the learning experience. The session provides an opportunity for managers to:

* Exchange ideas and questions with others
* Discuss the context of how concepts and skills apply in the workplace
* Practice and begin application of those concepts and skills
* Build momentum and support for applying the concepts and skills in the workplace

The Café session focuses specifically on the following concepts and tasks from the Process Improvement topic:

* Identify problems
* Brainstorm performance improvements
* Define metrics
* Test your ideas
* Address obstacles
* Roll out the process

Facilitating the Café session as outlined should take approximately 60 minutes. If the facilitator prefers a shorter session or wishes to spend more time on a specific concept or activity, he or she may want to cover only those concepts and activities that are most relevant to the group.

*Preparing for the Café: Warm calls*

In this café, facilitators can opt to use a “warm call” related to the pre-work practice activity “Create a Map and Identify Problems.” In a warm call, a facilitator contacts participants ***in advance*** to ask them to speak to a particular question during the session. This technique can help the group become comfortable with sharing and participating in virtual sessions. To use the warm call approach, a facilitator sends out an email to 2–3 participants as a follow-up to the general announcement email, asking them to prepare for the warm call. For example:

Dear [Individual]:

As a follow-up to the announcement for the Process Improvement Café session that will be held on [insert date], I am writing to ask if you would be willing to be a “warm call” volunteer during the discussion. A warm call is when I ask an individual in advance to be prepared to speak to a particular question during a webinar. For this session, it would entail:

1. Documenting a map as you complete the pre-work practice activity “Create a Map and Identify Problems”
2. Sending your map to me in advance of the session
3. Talking briefly about your map and the problems you identified when I call on you during the Café session.

Could you let me know whether you will be able to prepare this for the session?

| SECTION | ACTIVITY | TIME |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Introduction** | * + Show icebreaker question while participants are arriving to the session (THINK OF A TIME WHEN YOU WANTED TO IMPROVE A BUSINESS PROCESS [LARGE OR SMALL]. WHAT WAS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF THE EXPERIENCE?)   Introduce facilitators.  Review tips for using technology during the session.  Debrief icebreaker question.  Set context: Process improvements help businesses run more productively and efficiently. Although many process improvements are large efforts, such as implementing a new manufacturing process in hundreds of facilities, they can also be on a smaller scale, such as reducing the number of steps required to get an expense approved. No matter the size of the effort, managers need to know what to look for and how to make a process better.  Review session objectives: Help participants:   * + Identify what to improve   + Redesign a process   + Implement a process | 9 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Identify what to improve** | Debrief practice activity: “Create a Map and Analyze the Process” from the online Harvard ManageMentor Process Improvement topic. Participants review example maps from warm call volunteers and discuss:   * + How did you identify the problem areas?   + What else can we do to identify problem areas? | 16 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Redesign the process** | Facilitate discussion: Brainstorm performance improvements. Using their pre-work examples, participants:   * + Reflect on one process improvement they plan to focus on (e.g., improve quality, save money, reduce cycle time, exceed customer expectations)   + Discuss how they would measure performance.   Facilitate practice activity: Test your ideas. Using a fictional scenario, participants:   * + Identify how they can test ideas for improving an identified area | 16 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Implement the new process** | Facilitate practice activity: Overcome resistance. Using the same fictional scenario, participants discuss how a manager can overcome resistance as a new process is implemented.  Facilitate discussion: Roll out the process. Participants reflect on what steps they can take to implement the process they mapped out for their pre-work. | 16 minutes |
| **Applying what you’ve learned** | Review session objectives and skill areas discussed.  Review directions for completing the On-the-Job section of the online Harvard ManageMentor topic, including the action plan.  Close the session. | 3 minutes |

Part 3: Application (self-paced, individual)

After the live Café session, participants are expected to complete the following assignments:

* Complete the online On-the-Job section in the Harvard ManageMentor Process Improvement topic. The section provides learners with an opportunity to choose a skill to focus on and create an action plan for applying and developing the skill. *Note:* If your organization does not include the On-the-Job section in your configuration of Harvard ManageMentor, ask participants to think of two things they can do over the next 90 days to further apply and develop their skills in this area.
* Execute their action plan over a specified time frame (e.g., 60 or 90 days).
* After the specified time frame (e.g., 60 or 90 days), access the online On-the-Job section in the Harvard ManageMentor Process Improvement topic to update the action plan and reflect on the experience.