



▲ **Jim Mikulski**, a senior consultant with SA Partners, leads a group of delegates from the Americas in an Improvement Skills (Green Belt) training. Photos by Doug Wright (Doug.Wright@CookMedical.com), the archiving specialist for Corporate Marketing & Communication.

Thoughtful thinking, creative problem solving, and being better

Lee Coppin's contagious passion for
continuous improvement



Growth. Change. Progress.

In many ways, these ideas guide us in our daily lives to be better friends, employees, and people. They inspire us to embrace new ideas and approach problems with creative thinking. They remind us to shake off stagnancy and to strive for continuous improvement.

These are just a few ideas that fire up **Lee Coppin** when he talks about his passion for problem solving.

When talking to Lee, it is likely that his work will come up in conversation. His enthusiasm for growth, change, and progress sneak into his sentences, and before you know it, you've learned something new about employee empowerment and efficient processes. And as Cook's global director for Continuous Improvement, Lee is certainly excited about the continuous improvement efforts in the company.

With his focus on the non-manufacturing side of the business, Lee hopes to break down some of the barriers that discourage change and clarify some of the misconceptions that sometimes surround what continuous improvement is and why it matters.

So, what is continuous improvement (CI)?

"Continuous improvement is using a very simple approach to looking at problems and getting around to the cause behind them," Lee said, "It's a simple, practical way of thinking to help you make your job better."

"It's seeing something that could be better, coming up with ideas, collecting information and data, and seeing whether the assumptions are right and using that data to show where to go next," he continued.

Cook's CI efforts began in Manufacturing with John Enneking, but these efforts are now expanding to the whole company.

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▲ Delegates from a Green Belt training are pictured front, row from left: **Todd Henning** (a project manager 2 for Customer Delivery Centers), **Bonnie Zucco** (Manufacturing engineer at Cook Vandergrift), and **Michelle Graef** (a Divisional Systems and Quality manager for Cook Inc.) In the background, from left: **Stephen Kustra** (a senior engineer at Cook Vandergrift) and **Kimbrly Sinks** (a manager for IT at Cook Research Inc.).

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– Lee Coppin, global director for Continuous Improvement (CI)



▲ **Lee Coppin**

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For example, a number of Cook teams in Europe wondered if there was a way to optimize their time management by modifying their meetings. They took a look at the frequency of their meetings, noted how the meetings were run, and how the time was being spent. After collecting this information, they were able to see that there was room for improvement.

"After that, they put a formal framework around their meetings, and by simply doing that, the first time they applied it, they got back 16 hours a week," Lee said.

A standardized agenda was created for each meeting. This agenda was followed to ensure that the group stayed focused and gained value out of each meeting. With this simple idea, these teams were able to regain two days' worth of time that were spent in meetings, and now they are able to work on more projects.

And according to Lee, "That's continuous improvement. It's as simple as that."

Having a clean desk is another simple way to help with continuous improvement

"By only having what you need and making sure you have the tools you need to succeed, you are promoting getting things done right, and right the first time."

In his role, Lee aims to showcase how simple continuous improvement efforts can be, but even more so, how these efforts can make a difference at Cook.

So, why try CI?

While continuous improvement efforts will often have a positive impact on a company's bottom-line, there are other, non-monetary benefits as well.

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"Continuous improvement is about how we can make what we do better for the customers, for the patients, by adjusting our processes. The company will do better when it is helping patients more effectively."

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for the customers, for the patients, by adjusting our processes," Lee said. "The company will do better when it is helping patients more effectively."

Implementing CI initiatives at Cook is a way of growing our company culture and helping support how business is done every day, in every department, and by every employee.

"If you think about it, if every employee saves themselves 5 minutes on a task once a week, we will have 10,000 people doing that every week," Lee said.

That's 50,000 minutes per week. 833 hours. 104 workdays.

"Think about how much more impact that could have to helping others and completing work," Lee continued. "That's continuous improvement."

It's not about being right or wrong, but having an idea, and trying to make it better. It's about thoughtful direction to learn, change, and grow.

"What we ask people do when we train them is to look at the problem they are trying to fix and look at it from the customer's point of view for that process and make it better for the customer," Lee said.

"What we have asked managers to do, leaders to do, is to focus on growing their teams and enabling their people," he continued.

Continuous improvement is about how we develop one another, how we manage our teams, and how we make it possible for everyone to be the best they can at Cook. It's about enabling people to fix the small problems everyday, everywhere, and slowly make progress. And it's about making it possible for us as a company and as individuals to grow.

"I honestly believe that Cook has made a massive impact, not only on patients, but on the community of people that work with them," Lee said. "As a business it is our duty to be the best that we can, to grow, and be here."

"It's important for Cook because what we did yesterday to be successful isn't going to make us successful tomorrow. It's important for Cook because we have a wealth of people with a wealth of knowledge. We'd be remiss if we didn't use every ounce of that."

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