

# Self Assessment: Lean Product Development Opportunities and Challenges

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## Purpose

Assess your organization's opportunities and challenges as you begin to use lean product development to improve product development performance. This questionnaire looks at key dimensions of product development performance and the foundational problem-solving and decision-making skills of lean product development.

## Where are the Opportunities to Improve Decision-Making?

For each statement, mark the box that shows how much you agree or disagree with it:

#	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	When we go into a Decision Meeting or Gate Review, we know that the right people will be in the room to make decisions.					
2	Managers in my organization ask good, challenging questions when I present my findings and recommendations to them.					
3	When I recognize a problem that we have seen before, I have the ability to find out how we solved it last time.					
4	We explore multiple alternatives before making key decisions.					
5	The technical staff gets regular opportunities to deepen their customer knowledge with early customer feedback on their product designs.					
6	Product development programs meet their schedules consistently.					
7	Decision makers take the time to understand the problems, alternatives and recommendations before making a decision.					
8	There are few design loopbacks late in development.					
9	We take the time to capture what we've learned so that we can share it with others and reuse it ourselves later.					
10	We do not hold up the flow of technical work with artificial barriers imposed by the phases and gates on our Product Development Process.					
11	We take some time to understand root causes before we recommend countermeasures or solutions.					
12	Customers are highly satisfied with our product's quality.					
13	When we go into a Decision Meeting or Gate Review, we are confident that there will be no last minute objections or issues to delay decisions.					
14	Managers in my organization use systematic problem-solving to solve problems within their span of control.					
15	We take the time to identify the people who need to be consulted about a decision, and then engage them in the decision-making process.					
16	We take the time to measure results and reflect upon the effectiveness of the decisions that we make so that we can learn.					
17	Our group's leaders do not second guess the decisions they have delegated to their teams.					
18	My team's information systems make it easy to find documentation from past projects that could be helpful to me now.					

#	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
19	We understand what problems we need to solve early in development to minimize technical risk and we solve them before we enter detailed design.					
20	We actively search out reusable knowledge and expert input as part of our problem-solving and decision-making processes.					
21	We know what our customers will pay for our products and we have the ability to design our products to cost targets that maximize value for our customers and profits for our organization.					
22	We know who has the authority to make the important decisions in our organization.					
23	We have the ability to kill a product development program in early development when it becomes clear that the product won't meet its goals.					
24	We have the capacity to deliver the products needed to achieve our organization's growth targets without overloading development resources or adding additional staff.					

## What Patterns Do You Observe?

Score 1 point for each Strongly Disagree, 2 for Agree, 3 for Neutral, 4 for Agree and 5 for Strongly Agree.

Questions 6, 8, 24: Resource Maximization: Ability to optimize capacity, development resources and time-to-market.

Max: 15

Your Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions : 5, 12, 21: Customer Value: Ability to maximize customer value, including benefits, quality and cost.

Max: 15

Your Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions 4, 7, 11, 16, 19,: Systematic Problem Solving: Ability to use problem-solving methods that solve problems systematically and permanently.

Max: 25

Your Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions 1, 10, 13, 15, 23: Effective Decision-Making: Ability to make decisions that deliver the expected results without being revisited or causing unintended side effects.

Max: 25

Your Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions 3, 9, 18, 20: Knowledge Capture and Re-use: Ability to maximize value from the organization's knowledge.

Max: 20:

Your Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions 2, 14, 17, 22: Support to Grow Problem Solving Skills: Ability to support each other and coach development staff to build problem-solving ability in every member of the team.

Max: 20

Your Score: \_\_\_\_\_



## Recommendations

Each product development organization has unique circumstances that make general recommendations based on a simple questionnaire highly speculative. My experience has shown that there are some general patterns:

**Resource Maximization:** Ability to optimize capacity, development resources and time-to-market.

If you scored medium to low on this dimension (3 - 9) then lean product development practices like rapid learning cycles, visual management and convergent decisionmaking will improve the flow of work to help you eliminate the root causes of schedule delays, overloaded resources and insufficient R & D capacity.

If you scored high on this dimension (10 - 15) but you scored low on Customer Value, then you will benefit more from practices that will help you apply systematic problem-solving more rigorously, and deepen technical and customer knowledge.

If you scored medium to low on both dimensions, mastering the foundational lean product development practices of rapid learning cycles, visual management and effective decisions will help you improve both dimensions at once.

**Customer Value:** Ability to maximize customer value, including benefits, quality and cost.

If you scored medium to low on this dimension (3 - 9) then lean product development practices like Voice of the Customer, Design for Lean, reusable knowledge capture and target costing will help you deliver more customer and business value in your products.

The final four dimensions assess your current capabilities with the foundational practices of lean product development. Many organizations score low to medium on all four dimensions when they start with lean product development. These groups get results the fastest when they select pilot teams to experiment with foundational lean product development practices like LAMDA, A3 thinking, visual management and nemawashi. The pilot teams build internal proofs that lean product development works, and once these practices have been proven, it is much easier to get widespread adoption.

**Systematic Problem Solving:** Ability to use problem-solving methods that solve problems systematically and permanently.

If you scored medium to low on this dimension (3 - 9) but higher on the other dimensions, the ability to solve problems systematically using tools like LAMDA and A3 Thinking form the foundation for advanced lean product development practices like convergent decision-making.

**Effective Decision-Making:** Ability to make decisions that deliver the expected results without being revisited or causing unintended side effects.

If you scored medium to low on this dimension (3 - 9) but higher on the others, then lean meeting practices, nemawashi, visual management and A3 reports will help you leverage your strengths in these other areas into your decision-making.

**Knowledge Capture and Re-use:** Ability to maximize value from the organization's knowledge.

If you scored medium to low on this dimension (3 - 9) but higher on the others, then learning how to recognize, capture and share reusable knowledge will help you get more value from the solutions you develop and the decisions that you make so that you do not solve the same problems over and over.

**Support to Grow Problem Solving Skills:** Ability to support each other and coach development staff to build problem-solving ability in every member of the team.

If you scored medium to low on this dimension (3 - 9) but higher on the others, then learning how to serve as a coach and mentor will help you share your problem-solving and decision-making strengths with the other members of your organization.



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