NINE PEAKS SOLUTIONS
Your 'Peak' Performance Technology Partner®

PRACTICAL GUIDE

Digital Transformation & Continuous Improvement

A Long-Term Vision. A Series of Manageable Improvements

Discover how to build lasting organizational value through digital transformation, information preservation, and continuous improvement—one manageable project at a time.

Prepared by Nine Peaks Solutions LLC, helping organizations improve operations, preserve valuable information, and achieve lasting results through technology and human ingenuity.

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Laserfiche® Solution Provider

People | Solutions | Lasting Results



THE NINE PEAKS COLLECTION

North Sister (Faith) | Peak 5 of 9

One of the nine Cascade peaks that inspired the name Nine Peaks Solutions

Discover the mountains behind our name:
The Mountains

THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY

A Long-Term Vision. One Stepping Stone at a Time.

Every organization has opportunities to improve how information is managed, how work gets done, and how services are delivered.

Some opportunities are obvious. Employees spend too much time searching for documents. Paper forms require repeated handling. Information must be entered into multiple systems. Approvals take longer than necessary. Important historical records remain locked inside aging software.

Other opportunities are less visible. Valuable knowledge exists only in the experience of longtime employees. Departments perform similar work using different procedures. Existing technology provides capabilities that have never been fully explored.

Together, these challenges represent opportunities for digital transformation.

Digital transformation is not simply the introduction of new technology. It is the deliberate improvement of how an organization operates by making better use of information, processes, people, and technology.

Need Help with Technology or Digital Transformation Terminology?

If you encounter an unfamiliar term or would like additional information about a concept discussed in this guide, visit the Nine Peaks Solutions **Laserfiche Glossary & Project Terms** webpage for explanations of common Laserfiche features, technology, and project terminology.

Think Long-Term. Implement in Manageable Steps

An organization should consider its full potential for improvement, even when it is not practical to pursue every opportunity immediately.

The long-term vision provides direction. Individual projects provide progress.

Rather than attempting to transform the entire organization through one large initiative, a more practical approach is to identify a series of manageable improvements. Each project addresses a specific need, produces a useful result, and creates a foundation for what comes next.

Think of these projects as steppingstones across a stream. Each stone represents meaningful progress toward a larger destination.

The important consideration is not how quickly an organization can implement new technology. It is how consistently it can deliver improvements that produce lasting value.

Three Ways to Build Lasting Value

Preserve valuable information. Protect historical records, recover information from retired systems, digitize paper documents, and capture institutional knowledge that might otherwise be lost.

Improve how work gets done. Digitize information, automate repetitive activities, and transform processes to improve efficiency, accuracy, accessibility, and service delivery.

Make improvement continuous. Establish objectives, measure existing performance, implement manageable changes, evaluate results, and use those results to guide future improvements.

These activities reinforce one another. Preserved and accessible information supports better processes. Improved processes create opportunities for further automation. Continuous improvement helps organizations recognize and pursue the next opportunity.

Step by step. Task by task. Project by project. Your Business. Better!®

RECOGNIZING OPPORTUNITIES

Recognizing Opportunities Across Your Organization

Opportunities for digital transformation often begin with a simple observation: something takes longer than it should, requires unnecessary effort, or could be done more effectively.

Employees may have developed workarounds to compensate for inefficient processes. Departments may maintain duplicate information because systems do not communicate. Important documents may exist but remain difficult to locate. Activities that once made sense may no longer be necessary.

Over time, these practices become accepted as the normal way of doing business.

The first step toward continuous improvement is recognizing that the way work is done today may not be the best way to do it tomorrow.

Look for Everyday Frustrations

Some of the most valuable improvement opportunities are found in routine activities.

- **Repetitive manual work** — Information entered multiple times, documents repeatedly prepared, or routine activities requiring unnecessary handling.
- **Information retrieval** — Employees spending excessive time locating documents, confirming information, or requesting records from other departments.
- **Delays and bottlenecks** — Approvals, handoffs, and decisions that slow down otherwise straightforward processes.
- **Disconnected systems** — Applications that contain related information but require employees to manually transfer data between them.
- **Paper-dependent processes** — Forms, records, and approvals that require printing, physical handling, or manual filing.
- **Information at risk** — Historical records in aging systems, paper documents vulnerable to deterioration, or institutional knowledge held by a limited number of employees.

These challenges affect organizations of every size. A small business may encounter them in purchasing or accounting. A city or county may experience similar problems in records management, permitting, public information requests, or administrative approvals.

Listen to the People Doing the Work

Employees who perform an activity regularly often understand its inefficiencies better than anyone else.

They know which steps create delays, which information is difficult to obtain, and which procedures require unnecessary effort.

Asking employees what they would improve can reveal opportunities that are not obvious to management or technology personnel.

Useful questions include:

- Which activities consume more time than they should?
- What information is repeatedly requested or difficult to locate?
- Where do employees maintain spreadsheets or manual workarounds?
- Which tasks depend heavily on one person's knowledge?
- What would make it easier to serve customers, citizens, or coworkers?

The objective is not to criticize existing practices. It is to understand why they developed and determine whether a better approach is possible.

Think Across the Organization

Individual departments may identify immediate needs, but a broader organizational perspective can reveal opportunities that extend beyond a single activity.

A document management improvement in one department may benefit others. An automated approval process may provide a model for additional workflows. Information recovered from a retired application may become useful to multiple business functions.

Organizations should consider these broader possibilities while recognizing that implementation can proceed through individual, manageable projects.

A long-term vision helps identify the destination. Individual improvements provide the stepping stones to reach it.

Continuous Improvement Question

What activity, process, or information management challenge would you improve first if you could recover staff time, reduce frustration, or deliver better service?

As you read the following sections, consider the opportunities within your own organization. Later in this guide, the planning exercise will help you evaluate and prioritize those opportunities.

My Organization's Improvement Opportunities

1. An activity that consumes unnecessary staff time:

   _____

2. Information that is difficult to locate or at risk of being lost:

   _____

3. A process that could be simplified or automated:

   _____

DIGITIZE → AUTOMATE → TRANSFORM

Three Approaches to Improving How Work Gets Done

Digital transformation can take many forms. Some improvements involve converting information into electronic formats. Others eliminate repetitive manual activities or fundamentally change how a service or process operates.

Understanding the differences among digitization, automation, and transformation helps organizations select improvements that match their needs, resources, and long-term objectives.

These activities often build upon one another, but each can deliver meaningful benefits independently.

A Framework That Has Evolved

Nine Peaks Solutions has been helping organizations understand digital transformation since its early years. Our 2017 publications explored five phases of digital transformation, from digitizing documents through transforming business processes. Although the framework has evolved, the underlying objective remains the same: helping organizations improve how they manage information, perform work, and deliver results.



Figure 1 - The Digital Transformation Model – Digitize, Automate, & Transform

Digitize – Make Information More Accessible

Digitization converts paper documents, physical records, or manually maintained information into electronic formats that can be organized, searched, shared, and protected.

Examples include:

- **Paper records –** Scan and index documents to make information electronically accessible.
- **Electronic forms** — Replace paper forms with electronic information collection.
- **Historical information** — Recover valuable data and documents from older applications.
- **Document organization** — Establish consistent naming, metadata, and search practices.
- **Existing electronic information** — Organize digital files, apply consistent metadata, and make previously difficult-to-find information searchable and accessible.

Digitization can reduce physical storage requirements, improve information retrieval, and provide a foundation for additional improvements.

However, converting a paper process into an electronic process does not automatically eliminate unnecessary steps.

Continuous improvement question: What information would become more useful if it were easier to locate, access, or share?

Automate — Reduce Repetitive Manual Work

Automation uses technology to perform routine activities, move information between steps, and support consistent processing with less manual intervention.

Examples include:

- **Approvals and notifications** — Automatically route requests to appropriate personnel and notify participants when action is required.
- **Document processing** — Classify, organize, and distribute information based on established rules.
- **Information exchange** — Transfer information between business applications without repeated manual entry.
- **Routine calculations and reporting** — Reduce repetitive preparation and improve consistency.

Automation can shorten processing times, reduce errors, improve accountability, and free employees to concentrate on activities requiring their experience and judgment.

Before automating an existing process, organizations should examine whether every step is necessary.

Automating an inefficient process may simply allow the organization to perform unnecessary work faster.

Continuous improvement question: Which repetitive activity could be simplified or eliminated before considering automation?

Transform — Rethink How Work Is Accomplished

Transformation goes beyond converting information or automating existing steps. It involves reconsidering how an activity, service, or process should operate to achieve a better outcome.

Examples include:

- **Customer and public services** — Replace processes dependent on office visits, paper submissions, or repeated status inquiries with accessible electronic services.
- **Cross-department processes** — Redesign activities involving multiple departments to reduce handoffs and improve coordination.
- **Information access** — Make authorized information available when and where it is needed rather than requiring employees to request it from another person.
- **Business processes** — Reconsider existing procedures to eliminate unnecessary activities, improve decision-making, and deliver better results.

Transformation may involve new technology, changes in responsibilities, revised procedures, or a combination of these activities.

The objective is not simply to make an existing process faster. It is to determine whether a better process is possible.

Continuous improvement question: If you were designing this process today, would you organize it the same way?

Choosing the Right Approach

Not every improvement requires all three activities.

Digitizing a collection of records may solve an immediate information-access problem. Simplifying a purchasing procedure may eliminate unnecessary effort without introducing sophisticated automation. Redesigning a public-facing service may involve digitization, automation, and organizational changes together.

The appropriate approach depends on the problem being addressed and the results the organization hopes to achieve.

Start with the desired improvement, not the technology.

As organizations gain experience, individual projects can become stepping stones toward broader digital transformation.

Each successful improvement creates an opportunity to evaluate what should come next.

PRESERVING VALUABLE INFORMATION

Protecting the Information Your Organization Depends On

Information is one of an organization's most valuable resources. It supports daily operations, decision-making, customer service, regulatory compliance, and the ability to understand past activities.

Yet valuable information is not always adequately protected or readily accessible.

Some information remains in aging business applications. Other records exist only on paper, in shared folders, or in disconnected systems. Important knowledge may reside primarily in the experience of employees who have performed their responsibilities for many years.

As organizations change, these information resources can become difficult to access, expensive to maintain, or permanently lost.

Preserving valuable information is an essential part of digital transformation—not simply an activity associated with replacing technology.

Recognizing Information at Risk

Organizations should periodically evaluate where important information resides and whether it will remain accessible when needed.

Common risks include:

- **Retired or aging applications** — Historical information may become inaccessible when software is replaced, licensing ends, or technical support is discontinued.
- **Paper records** — Important documents may be difficult to locate, vulnerable to physical damage, or dependent on manual retrieval.
- **Institutional knowledge** — Experienced employees may possess valuable procedures, historical context, and operational knowledge that has never been formally documented.
- **Disconnected information** — Records distributed across applications, shared drives, and departments may be difficult to locate, interpret, or use together.
- **Inconsistent information management** — Missing documentation, unclear ownership, inadequate security, or inconsistent retention practices can create operational and compliance risks.

These challenges are not limited to large organizations. Small businesses, local governments, healthcare providers, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations all depend on information that must remain available and trustworthy.

Preservation Is More Than Storage

Simply retaining information does not guarantee that it will remain useful.

A collection of historical records may technically exist but provide little practical value if employees cannot locate the information, understand its context, or determine whether it is accurate.

Effective information preservation considers several important requirements:

- **Accessibility** — Can authorized individuals retrieve the information when needed?
- **Organization** — Are records classified, indexed, and searchable?
- **Context** — Is sufficient information preserved to understand what the records represent?
- **Security** — Is sensitive information protected from unauthorized access?
- **Integrity** — Can the organization maintain confidence that information is complete and reliable?
- **Retention** — Are applicable retention, legal hold, and disposition requirements understood and followed?

Addressing these requirements helps organizations preserve information in a form that supports continued business use, historical reference, and compliance obligations.

Information Preservation Creates New Opportunities

Preservation is not simply about protecting the past. It can also improve present operations and support future decisions.

Historical records recovered from a retired system may eliminate the need to maintain an expensive application solely for occasional information requests.

Digitized paper documents can become searchable and accessible to authorized employees without requiring physical retrieval.

Documented institutional knowledge can improve employee training, reduce dependence on individual personnel, and support consistent procedures.

In each example, information preservation creates an opportunity for additional improvements.

Information that is preserved, organized, and accessible becomes a resource for continuous improvement.

Start with the Information That Matters Most

Organizations do not need to preserve or reorganize every information resource through one large initiative.

A practical approach begins by identifying information that is valuable, difficult to access, or at risk of being lost.

The next step is to understand its operational importance, applicable retention requirements, current accessibility, and the effort required to preserve it appropriately.

Individual preservation projects can then become stepping stones toward a broader information management strategy.

The following section explores three important opportunities: recovering information from legacy digital systems, digitizing paper records, and capturing institutional knowledge.

Continuous improvement question: What valuable information within your organization could become difficult to access—or be permanently lost—because of aging systems, paper-based storage, or dependence on individual employees?

My Organization's Information Preservation Opportunities

1. Information stored in aging or soon-to-be-retired applications:

Test 1

2. Paper records or other information that is difficult to retrieve:

Test 2

3. Important knowledge held by employees that should be documented:

Test knowledge

THREE APPROACHES TO INFORMATION PRESERVATION

Digital Reclamation™, Paper Records & Institutional Knowledge

Organizations accumulate valuable information in many forms. Some information resides in aging business applications, some remains in physical files, and some exists primarily in the knowledge and experience of employees.

Although these information resources present different challenges, they share an important characteristic: **their value depends on the organization's ability to preserve, understand, and access them when needed.**

Three practical approaches can help organizations protect these resources while creating opportunities for greater efficiency and improved operations.

Digital Reclamation™ — Recover Information from Legacy Systems

When organizations replace business applications, they often concentrate on transferring the information needed for daily operations into the new system.

Historical information may receive less attention.

Older applications can contain years of employee records, payroll history, financial transactions, customer information, supporting documents, and other records that remain important long after the application is retired.

Maintaining access to these systems can create ongoing licensing, hosting, security, and administrative costs. In some cases, continued access may eventually become impossible.

Digital Reclamation™ focuses on recovering valuable information from legacy systems and preserving it in an accessible, useful form.

Typical activities include:

- **Identify historical information** — Determine which records and supporting documents must remain available for operational, historical, or compliance purposes.
- **Extract information** — Recover appropriate data and documents from the existing application.
- **Preserve context** — Maintain relationships, descriptions, dates, and other information necessary to understand the recovered records.
- **Organize for retrieval** — Structure information so authorized users can locate and use it without relying on the original application.
- **Validate and protect** — Review completeness, accuracy, access controls, and applicable retention requirements.

For example, an organization changing payroll or human capital management systems may need continued access to historical employee records, payroll transactions, and compliance documentation.

Rather than maintaining an entire retired application solely for occasional historical inquiries, the organization may be able to preserve the necessary information in a separate, searchable environment.

Potential benefits: Reduced dependence on legacy applications, improved historical information access, lower ongoing system costs, and stronger support for compliance activities.

Continuous Improvement Question: What historical information must your organization retain when an existing business application is replaced or retired?

Paper Records — Turn Stored Information into Accessible Resources

Many organizations possess years of valuable information stored in filing cabinets, storage rooms, boxes, and off-site facilities.

Although these records may be available, retrieving them can require significant manual effort. Employees must locate the appropriate file, identify the necessary document, and return or reproduce the information.

Paper records may also be vulnerable to physical damage, deterioration, misfiling, or loss.

Digitizing selected records can make information easier to locate, protect, and share with authorized users.

Typical activities include:

- **Evaluate existing collections** — Identify frequently requested, operationally important, or at-risk paper records.
- **Prepare and digitize** — Organize and scan documents using appropriate procedures and quality controls.
- **Index and classify** — Apply descriptive information, document types, and metadata to support retrieval.
- **Enable search and access** — Make digitized records available through appropriate document management and search capabilities.
- **Apply records requirements** — Address retention schedules, access restrictions, and authorized disposition procedures.

Not every paper record must be digitized immediately. Organizations can begin with collections that offer the greatest operational benefit or present the greatest preservation risk.

For example, a municipal office may prioritize frequently requested ordinances, resolutions, meeting records, or historical property documents.

Potential benefits: Faster document retrieval, reduced physical handling, improved information accessibility, better protection against loss, and more efficient responses to information requests.

Continuous Improvement Questions: Which paper records consume the most staff time to locate, retrieve, reproduce, or distribute? Are departments still producing paper records and storing them in file cabinets or banker boxes for long-term retention?

Institutional Knowledge — Preserve What Employees Know

Some of an organization's most valuable information is not stored in a document management system or business application.

It exists in the experience of employees.

Longtime personnel may understand why procedures were established, how unusual situations should be handled, where important information resides, and which decisions shaped current operations.

When these employees retire, change responsibilities, or leave the organization, valuable knowledge can disappear with them.

Capturing institutional knowledge helps transform individual experience into an organizational resource.

Practical approaches include:

- **Identify critical knowledge** — Determine which responsibilities, procedures, and historical information depend heavily on specific individuals.
- **Document processes** — Record important activities, decisions, exceptions, and operational instructions.
- **Capture explanations and context** — Preserve the reasoning behind procedures, not merely the steps involved.
- **Organize for future use** — Store information in searchable documents, templates, or structured electronic forms.
- **Maintain and improve** — Assign responsibility for reviewing and updating documented knowledge as procedures change.

For example, an experienced employee may know how to resolve unusual purchasing exceptions, prepare a specialized report, or locate historical records that are not consistently indexed.

Documenting this knowledge can support employee training, improve consistency, and reduce operational dependence on a single person.

Electronic forms and structured templates can help capture information consistently. Document management systems can then organize, secure, and make that information searchable.

Potential benefits: Reduced knowledge loss, improved employee onboarding, more consistent procedures, stronger business continuity, and better organizational resilience.

Continuous Improvement Question: What important organizational knowledge could be lost if a key employee were unavailable tomorrow?

Three Approaches. One Organizational Objective.

Digital Reclamation™, paper digitization, and institutional knowledge capture address different forms of information, but they contribute to the same objective: preserving valuable organizational resources and making them more useful.

These activities can also complement one another.

Historical information recovered from a retired system may be combined with supporting paper documents. Experienced employees may provide the context needed to understand those records. Together, these resources can create a more complete and accessible body of organizational information.

Organizations should evaluate preservation opportunities based on information value, operational needs, risks, and available resources.

The goal is not simply to preserve more information. It is to preserve the right information in a form that continues to deliver value.

My Organization's Information Preservation Priorities

Review the information preservation opportunities you identified earlier in this guide. Your previous responses are repeated below to help you evaluate which opportunity should receive attention first. If you need to revise an answer, return to the original question and update your response there.

1. Legacy digital information that should be recovered or preserved:

Test 1

2. Paper records that would benefit from digitization and search:

Test 2

3. Institutional knowledge that should be documented and shared:

Test knowledge

Which opportunity should receive attention first, and why?

These initial priorities will help you select a manageable improvement project in the planning exercise later in this guide.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT — PDCA

Continuous Improvement: Plan–Do–Check–Act

Digital transformation is not a destination reached through a single project. It is an ongoing process of identifying opportunities, implementing improvements, evaluating results, and building upon what has been learned.

Organizations often focus on implementing a new technology or completing a specific project. However, the long-term value of an improvement depends on whether it produces meaningful results and whether those results can be sustained.

Continuous improvement provides a structured approach to making progress, measuring success, and identifying the next opportunity.

One widely used methodology is Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA), a repeating four-stage cycle that encourages organizations to make manageable improvements based on measurable results.

Innovators Don't Stop Innovating

In our 2017 *Digital Transformation* guide, Nine Peaks Solutions described the final phase of digital transformation as **"Innovators Don't Stop Innovating."** The message was straightforward: digital transformation is about continuous improvement.

Nine years later, that principle remains central to our approach. Technology, organizational needs, and opportunities change. The objective is not simply to complete an improvement project, but to continue evaluating how work gets done and identify opportunities to make it better.

The Plan–Do–Check–Act Cycle

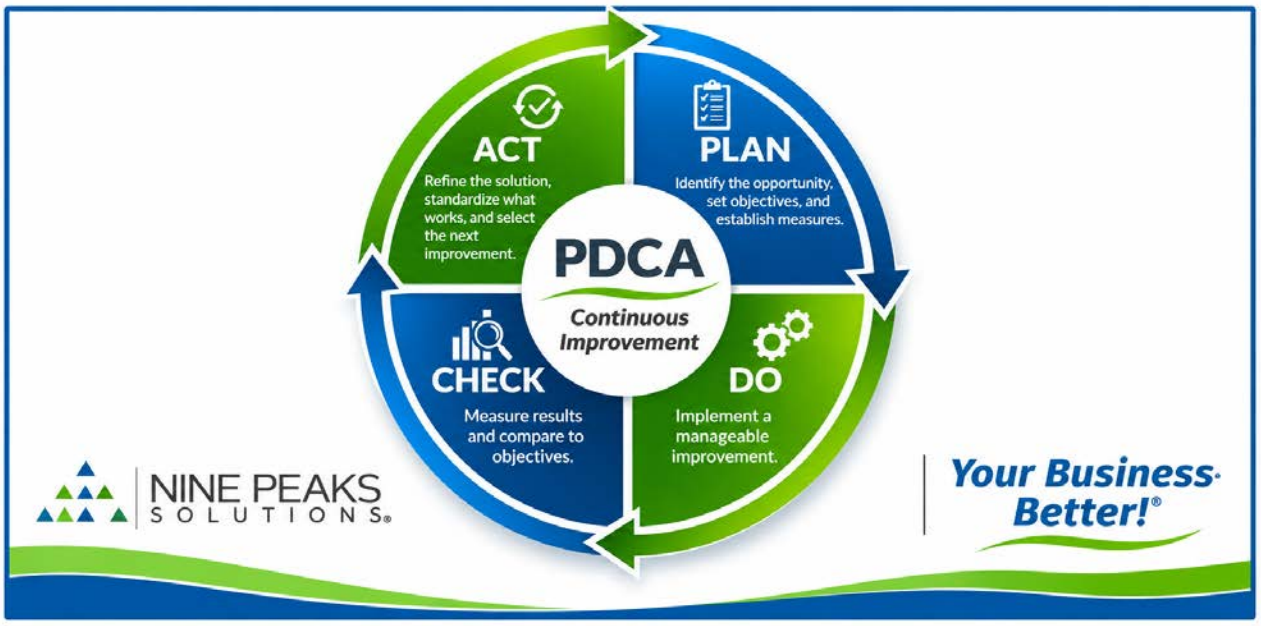


Figure 2 - The Plan - Do - Check - Act Continuous Improvement Diagram

PLAN — Identify the Opportunity

Begin by understanding the current process, the problem being addressed, and the results the organization hopes to achieve.

Document how the activity works today, including the time required, people involved, unnecessary steps, and recurring difficulties.

Establish baseline measurements before making changes.

Key question: What needs to improve, and how will we know whether the improvement was successful?

DO — Implement a Manageable Improvement

Introduce the proposed change on a scale appropriate to the opportunity.

The improvement may involve simplifying a procedure, eliminating unnecessary activities, digitizing information, automating repetitive work, or introducing new technology.

Whenever practical, begin with a limited implementation to validate the approach before expanding it.

Key question: Can we test the improvement without disrupting the entire organization?

CHECK — Measure and Evaluate the Results

Compare the results of the improvement with the original baseline and objectives.

Consider processing time, employee effort, error rates, information accessibility, service quality, and other relevant measures.

Not every benefit is financial. Improved consistency, reduced frustration, stronger compliance, and better customer service can also represent meaningful value.

Key question: Did the change deliver the expected improvement, and what did we learn?

ACT — Standardize and Continue Improving

When an improvement is successful, incorporate it into normal operations.

Update procedures, provide appropriate training, and establish responsibility for maintaining the improved process.

If the results fall short of expectations, refine the approach and repeat the cycle.

Use the experience gained to identify additional opportunities.

Key question: How can we sustain the improvement and determine what should come next?

A Real-World Example: Improving Purchase Order Production

Small Improvement. Measurable Results.

Nine Peaks Solutions applied continuous improvement principles to its own purchase order preparation process.

Previously, preparing a purchase order involved transferring information from a vendor quotation into a fillable purchase order form, preparing the completed document, and producing a signed PDF.

Although the process worked, it required repetitive handling of information that was already available in the vendor's original quotation.

The improvement was straightforward.

Instead of recreating the information contained in the quotation, Nine Peaks developed a simplified approach using a short fillable block containing the necessary purchase order information. The original vendor quotation became part of the completed document as a watermark, and an electronic signature completed the purchase order.

The result was a simpler process requiring approximately 20 fewer minutes per purchase order.

Applying PDCA to the Purchase Order Process

PLAN: Recognize that transferring information already present in the vendor quotation creates unnecessary effort. Identify an opportunity to simplify the process.

DO: Develop and implement a streamlined purchase order format that incorporates the original quotation and requires less manual preparation.

CHECK: Compare the preparation effort and calculate the time saved. The revised process reduces preparation time by approximately 20 minutes per purchase order.

ACT: Use the improved approach for ongoing purchase order preparation and continue looking for opportunities to simplify related activities.

Measuring the Annual Benefit

Nine Peaks Solutions prepares approximately 45 purchase orders annually.

Measurement	Result
Purchase orders annually	45
Time saved per purchase order	20 minutes
Total annual time savings	900 minutes
Annual staff time recovered	**15 hours**

This improvement did not require a major software implementation or an organization-wide transformation.

It required recognizing unnecessary work, reconsidering the existing process, and making a manageable change.

Fifteen hours recovered annually from one relatively small improvement demonstrates how continuous improvement can deliver measurable value.

Imagine the cumulative benefit of identifying similar opportunities across purchasing, accounting, human resources, records management, and other organizational activities.

Small Improvements Can Produce Significant Results

Not every continuous improvement project will recover 15 hours annually. Some will save more, while others may produce benefits that are difficult to express in hours or dollars.

The important practice is to establish a baseline, define the desired result, and evaluate what actually changed.

For activities performed repeatedly, even modest time savings can accumulate.

Annual Time Savings = Number of Activities per Year × Minutes Saved per Activity ÷ 60

Organizations can use this simple calculation to estimate the annual time recovered through improvements to recurring activities.

Other measures may include:

Processing time — Time required to complete a task or service.

Information retrieval — Time spent locating and accessing records.

Accuracy — Reduction in errors, corrections, or rework.

Service delivery — Improvements in response times and customer satisfaction.

Risk reduction — Stronger information security, records management, and compliance practices.

Employee capacity — Additional time available for activities that require human judgment and experience.

Time recovered does not automatically represent a reduction in payroll expense. It represents organizational capacity that can be redirected toward other valuable work.

Continuous Improvement Is an Ongoing Responsibility

A successful improvement should not be treated as the end of the process.

Organizations change. Personnel change. Technology evolves. New requirements emerge, and opportunities that were not previously practical may become achievable.

Periodically reviewing established processes helps organizations maintain the benefits of earlier improvements while recognizing new opportunities.

The objective is to make continuous improvement part of how the organization operates—not simply an occasional technology initiative.

Each completed PDCA cycle can become another stepping stone toward the organization's long-term vision.

Continuous Improvement Question

What recurring activity within your organization could be simplified, and how would you measure the improvement?

My Organization's Continuous Improvement Opportunity

1. Activity or process I would like to improve:

_____

2. Number of times this activity occurs annually: _____

3. Estimated minutes that could be saved per activity: _____

4. Estimated annual time savings (activities × minutes ÷ 60): _____

5. Other potential benefits beyond time savings:

_____

6. How will we measure the actual results after implementation?

The measurements and opportunities identified here can help you evaluate potential projects and begin developing your organizational improvement roadmap in the following section.

BUILDING YOUR IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

A Long-Term Vision. A Series of Manageable Projects

Throughout this guide, we have explored opportunities to preserve valuable information, improve processes, reduce repetitive work, and apply continuous improvement principles.

The next step is to bring those opportunities together into an organizational improvement roadmap.

An improvement roadmap provides direction for future activities while recognizing that every opportunity cannot—and should not—be implemented simultaneously.

The objective is to understand the organization's broader potential for improvement, then make progress through a series of manageable projects.



Figure 3 – A Path to Greater Value with a Series of Manageable Projects

Begin with the Long-Term Vision

Before selecting individual projects, consider what the organization could accomplish through several years of thoughtful improvements.

- Imagine an organization where:

- Important information is organized, protected, and readily accessible to authorized personnel.
- Repetitive administrative activities require less manual effort.
- Business applications exchange information without unnecessary duplication.
- Employees can concentrate more time on activities requiring their knowledge and judgment.
- Customers, citizens, and stakeholders receive timely, consistent service.
- Historical records and institutional knowledge remain available as personnel and technology change.
- Continuous improvement is part of normal organizational operations.

Not every organization will pursue all these objectives. The vision should reflect its own responsibilities, challenges, resources, and priorities.

The long-term vision identifies where the organization wants to go. The improvement roadmap identifies how to begin getting there.

Organize Opportunities into Manageable Projects

Review the opportunities identified in earlier sections of this guide.

Some may involve simple procedural changes. Others may require digitization, automation, system integration, information preservation, or a combination of activities.

Organize these opportunities into potential projects that can be independently planned, implemented, and evaluated.

For example:

Stepping Stone 1 — Improve Information Access

Digitize and organize a frequently requested collection of records, establish appropriate metadata, and make the information searchable.

Stepping Stone 2 — Simplify a Repetitive Process

Review an existing purchasing, approval, or administrative process. Eliminate unnecessary steps before introducing automation.

Stepping Stone 3 — Preserve Historical Information

Recover important records from a legacy application before the system is retired or access becomes unavailable.

Stepping Stone 4 — Connect Related Activities

Introduce electronic forms, automated notifications, or system integrations to reduce repetitive information handling.

Stepping Stone 5 — Expand Successful Improvements

Apply lessons learned from completed projects to additional processes, departments, or information collections.

These are illustrative examples, not a required sequence. Organizations should select and arrange projects according to their own needs.

Consider Value, Effort, and Readiness

Not every improvement opportunity offers the same benefit or requires the same investment.

Before establishing priorities, consider:

Expected value — Will the project save time, improve service, reduce risk, preserve important information, or increase organizational capacity?

Implementation effort — What time, funding, personnel, and technical resources will be required?

Organizational readiness — Are the necessary people, information, procedures, and management support available?

Dependencies — Must another improvement be completed before this project can succeed?

Urgency — Are there deadlines, compliance requirements, aging systems, or information-loss risks that require earlier attention?

Measurability — Can the organization establish a baseline and evaluate whether the project produced the expected results?

A small project with a clear benefit may be an excellent starting point. However, an urgent preservation or compliance requirement may deserve priority even when its immediate financial return is difficult to quantify.

Build on Each Successful Improvement

An organizational roadmap should be flexible.

As projects are completed, new opportunities may emerge. Results may exceed expectations, or experience may reveal that a different approach is needed.

Review the roadmap periodically, incorporate lessons learned, and adjust priorities as circumstances change.

The roadmap provides direction, not a rigid commitment to complete every project in a predetermined order.

Continuous Improvement Question

Looking across your organization, which improvements could build upon one another to create greater long-term value?

My Organization's Improvement Roadmap

Our long-term improvement objective:

_____

Stepping Stone 1 — An improvement we could begin soon:

_____

Stepping Stone 2 — An improvement that could build upon the first:

_____

Stepping Stone 3 — A longer-term opportunity:

_____

What dependencies or resources should we consider?

_____

When should we review and update this roadmap?

_____

The next section will help you evaluate your opportunities and develop a practical plan for your first improvement project.

YOUR FIRST IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Turning an Opportunity into an Actionable Plan

An organizational improvement roadmap becomes valuable when it leads to meaningful action.

The first project does not need to be the largest, most sophisticated, or most visible opportunity.

It should address an identifiable organizational need, have a realistic scope, and offer benefits that can be evaluated.

Choose a project that can demonstrate progress and establish a foundation for future improvements.

Step 1 — Review and Prioritize Your Opportunities

Return to the improvement opportunities and planning activities completed throughout this guide.

Consider which projects offer meaningful value, can be accomplished with available resources, and support your organization's longer-term objectives.

Use the following assessment to compare up to three opportunities.

Evaluation Criteria	Project A	Project B	Project C
Expected organizational benefit	◯ High ◯ Med ◯ Low	◯ High ◯ Med ◯ Low	◯ High ◯ Med ◯ Low
Implementation effort	◯ High ◯ Med ◯ Low	◯ High ◯ Med ◯ Low	◯ High ◯ Med ◯ Low
Urgency	◯ High ◯ Med ◯ Low	◯ High ◯ Med ◯ Low	◯ High ◯ Med ◯ Low
Organizational readiness	◯ High ◯ Med ◯ Low	◯ High ◯ Med ◯ Low	◯ High ◯ Med ◯ Low

A project with high expected benefit, manageable effort, and strong organizational readiness may be a good candidate for early implementation.

However, projects involving information at risk, compliance obligations, or critical operational requirements may warrant priority regardless of implementation effort.

Step 2 — Define Your First Project

Project name:

_____

What problem or opportunity will this project address?

_____

What improvement do we want to achieve?

_____

Who will be responsible for the project?

_____

Who else should participate?

_____

Step 3 — Establish the Baseline

Before implementing changes, document how the activity or process currently operates.

Choose measurements that reflect the intended improvement.

Current process or activity:

_____

Current performance measurement:

_____

Desired improvement or target:

_____

How will the results be measured?

_____

Examples of useful measurements include processing time, annual staff hours, document retrieval time, error rates, number of manual handoffs, service response time, and information accessibility.

For information preservation projects, measures may include the number of records recovered, successful retrieval tests, completeness of information, or reduced dependence on an aging application.

Step 4 — Identify Resources and Dependencies

Personnel or departments involved:

_____

Technology, information, or other resources needed:

_____

Estimated project cost or effort:

_____

Important dependencies, risks, or deadlines:

_____

Step 5 — Apply Plan–Do–Check–Act

Use the PDCA methodology to guide implementation and evaluation.

PLAN — What will we change, and what results do we expect?

_____

DO — How will we implement or test the improvement?

_____

CHECK — When and how will we evaluate the results?

_____

ACT — How will we sustain successful improvements or refine the approach?

_____

Step 6 — Establish Your Next Action

A practical improvement plan should conclude with a specific action and responsibility.

Our first action will be:

_____

Responsible person:

_____

Target start date: _____

Target review date: _____

Please record today's date and any notes – you may need to have multiple copies of this document:

Date: _____

Notes: _____

Save Your Form

From Planning to Continuous Improvement

Completing this assessment is not the end of the process. It is the beginning of a practical improvement initiative.

Once the first project is underway, monitor progress, measure results, and use what you learn to refine the approach.

When the improvement is complete, return to your organizational roadmap and consider the next opportunity.

Over time, individual improvements can produce meaningful changes in how the organization manages information, conducts business, and delivers services.

A long-term vision provides direction. Manageable projects create progress. Continuous improvement builds lasting value.

Step by step. Task by task. Project by project.

WHERE TO BEGIN

Start with a Useful, Achievable Outcome

A successful digital transformation initiative does not need to begin with an enterprise-wide project. Many organizations start with one meaningful operational or information-management challenge, establish a sound foundation, demonstrate value, and expand from there.

STEP	FOCUS	OUTPUT
1	**Choose the problem**	A process or information set with visible operational value.
2	**Define the information**	Documents, data, metadata, security, history, and retention needs.
3	**Map the work**	Roles, decisions, exceptions, approvals, notifications, and handoffs.
4	**Implement and test**	A working solution validated with representative users and content.
5	**Train and improve**	Documented ownership, support, measures, and next-stage opportunities.

How Nine Peaks Solutions can help

Nine Peaks Solutions helps organizations identify improvement opportunities, preserve valuable information, and make better use of their existing technology investments. Our services include Digital Reclamation™ of information from legacy systems, paper document digitization, process automation, system integration, information management, and technology consulting. We help organizations plan and implement manageable projects that address operational needs, improve efficiency, and build a foundation for continuous improvement.

Not sure where to begin with your system improvement plans? You don't need to have a project defined before starting a conversation. Use one of the links below to connect with Nine Peaks Solutions. We're here to help you identify opportunities and take the next step.

DISCUSS YOUR SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT GOALS

Schedule a consultation | Explore Laserfiche resources

Additional Resources

Nine Peaks Solutions Resources

Digital Transformation (2017)— An earlier Nine Peaks Solutions publication exploring the foundations of digital transformation and organizational improvement.

Laserfiche Basics — An introduction to Laserfiche and its capabilities.

Laserfiche Glossary & Project Terms — Definitions of terminology used throughout our resources.

Nine Peaks Solutions Resources — Practical guides, planning tools, and educational materials.

The Nine Peaks Collection — Explore the complete series of publications and practical guides.

Laserfiche 30 Day Free Trial — Explore Laserfiche Cloud capabilities with a free trial.

Laserfiche Product Resources

Laserfiche product overview

Laserfiche document and records management

Laserfiche intelligent data capture

Laserfiche artificial intelligence

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