WHY YOUR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM ISN'T WORKING

And what to do about it

James Petersen | NUME 2026



WORLD CLASS
TRANSFORMATION

THE PLAN

01 **Capture the current state**

Rate how continuous improvement works today.

02 **Find your priority gap**

Use the audience tally to focus our attention.

03 **Identify root cause**

Examine the conditions that keep the gap recurring.

04 **Examine leadership habits**

Compare habits that hold CI back with those that build culture.

05 **Choose your crossroads**

Assess your leadership and choose a behavior to change.

06 **Practice for 30 days**

Use daily PDCA to build and sustain the new behavior.

CURRENT STATE: REALITY CHECK

Rate each statement: 1 = Rarely true 2 = Sometimes 3 = Inconsistent 4 = Usually true 5 = How we operate every day

Purpose 1 2 3 4 5

People understand why improvement matters and how it connects to our goals.

Leadership 1 2 3 4 5

Leaders actively lead, coach, and participate in CI rather than delegating it.

Daily habit 1 2 3 4 5

Improvement is part of everyday work—not an event, project, or flavor of the month.

Problem solving 1 2 3 4 5

Leaders develop problem solvers instead of becoming the primary problem solvers.

Accountability 1 2 3 4 5

Expectations, results, gaps, owners, and follow-up are visible and consistent.

Learning 1 2 3 4 5

Problems are surfaced early and treated as opportunities to learn—not reasons to blame.

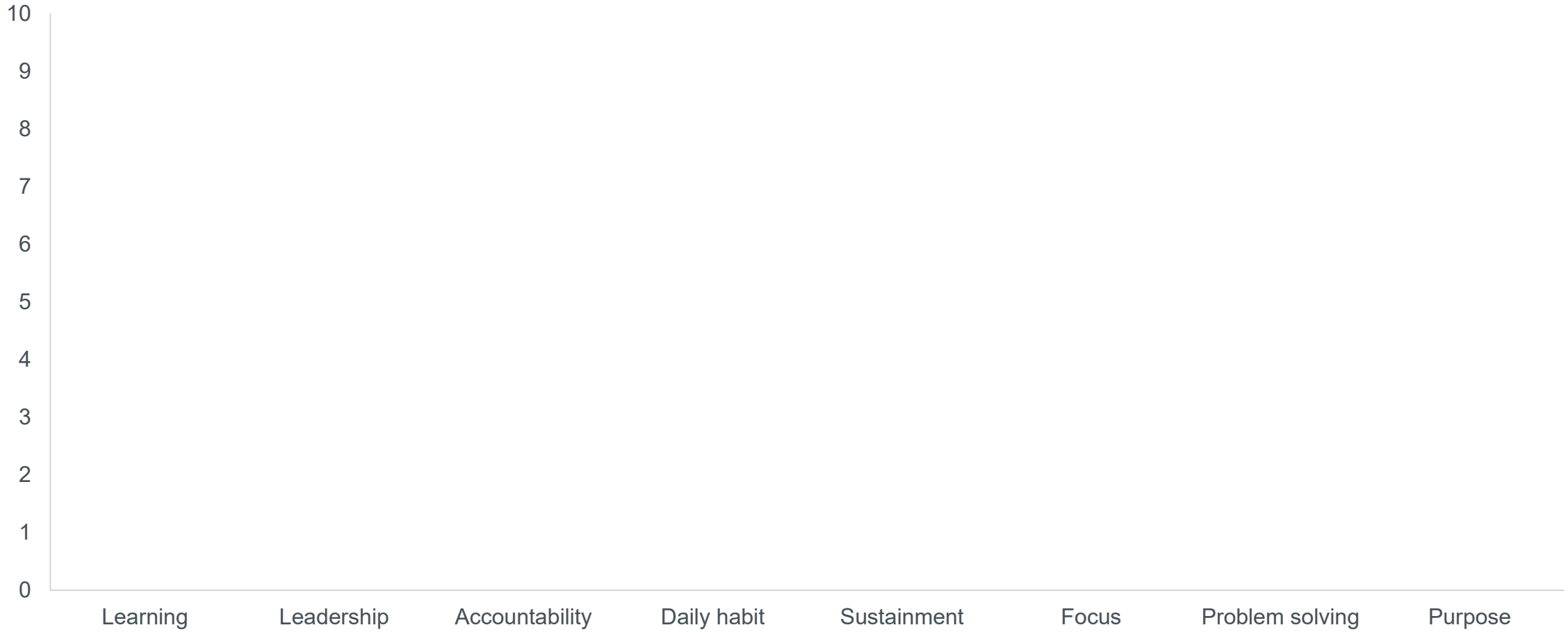
Focus 1 2 3 4 5

We distinguish productive improvement from simply being busy or reacting to the urgent.

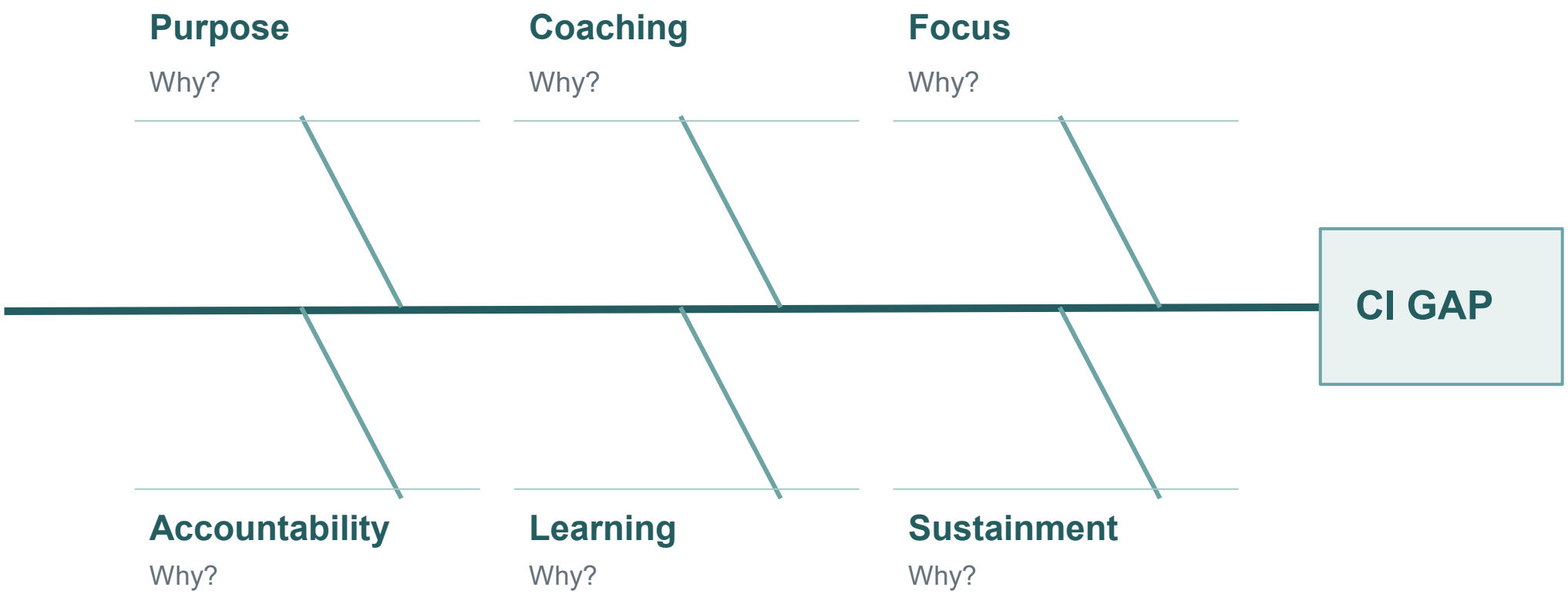
Sustainment 1 2 3 4 5

Improvements are followed up, standardized, and sustained after the initial push.

PARETO: WHERE SHOULD WE FOCUS?



IDENTIFY THE CAUSE OF A RECURRING GAP



Ask: Which leadership behavior keeps this gap in place?

LEADERSHIP HABITS THAT HOLD CI BACK

Purpose

No clear vision connects CI to business goals.

Leadership

Leaders delegate CI and give little coaching.

Daily habit

Firefighting displaces everyday improvement.

Problem solving

Leaders supply answers instead of building skill.

Accountability

Expectations are unclear or stated only once.

Learning

Blame and language barriers hide problems.

Focus

Urgent demands crowd out agreed priorities.

Sustainment

Follow-up fades and old practices return.

LEADERSHIP HABITS THAT BUILD CI CULTURE

Purpose

Explain the vision and how CI serves the business.

Accountability

Clarify expectations, owners, and follow-up.

Leadership

Model improvement and coach people each day.

Learning

Invite problems and check understanding.

Daily habit

Make PDCA part of everyday work.

Focus

Protect time for a few important priorities.

Problem solving

Ask questions so employees develop solutions.

Sustainment

Check results and standardize what works.

THE LEADERSHIP CROSSROADS

Which leadership behavior will you change?



- Clear vision
- No vision
- Actively leading CI
- Delegating CI
- Daily PDCA
- Firefighting
- Developing problem solvers
- Giving answers



- Clear expectations and accountability
- Unclear expectations
- Learning and understanding
- Blame and barriers
- Focused priorities
- Urgent demands
- Sustained standards
- Fading follow-up

LEADERSHIP SELF-ASSESSMENT

Rate yourself: 1 = rarely, 3 = inconsistently, 5 = every day

I know and explain the vision of CI	1	2	3	4	5
I invite problems without blame	1	2	3	4	5
I coach with questions	1	2	3	4	5
I use PDCA and check what changed	1	2	3	4	5
I remove barriers and limit priorities	1	2	3	4	5
I follow up until the new way sticks	1	2	3	4	5

Circle your lowest score. What behavior will you practice first?

30-DAY LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

TODAY Choose one leadership behavior that could transform your CI culture, if you improved it.

THE NEXT 7 DAYS: REPEAT PDCA EACH DAY

PLAN	Choose one action to practice today that will help change your behavior.
DO	Practice that behavior during real work.
CHECK	At day's end, review how you did.
ACT	Adjust your plan for tomorrow.

THIS MONTH After seven days, choose the next behavior and repeat the daily PDCA cycle.

The difference is in the leader you become.

KEEP THE CHANGE MOVING

Request the slides or continue the conversation

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