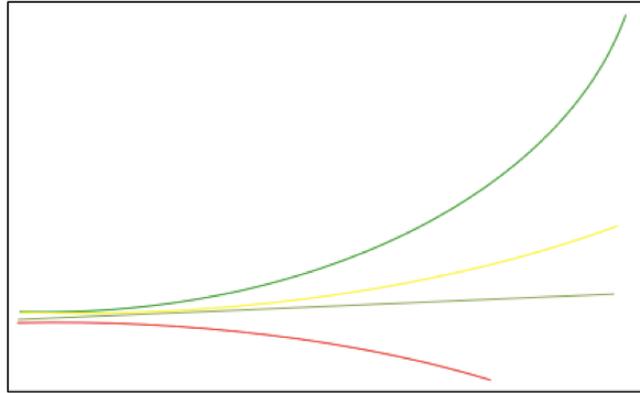
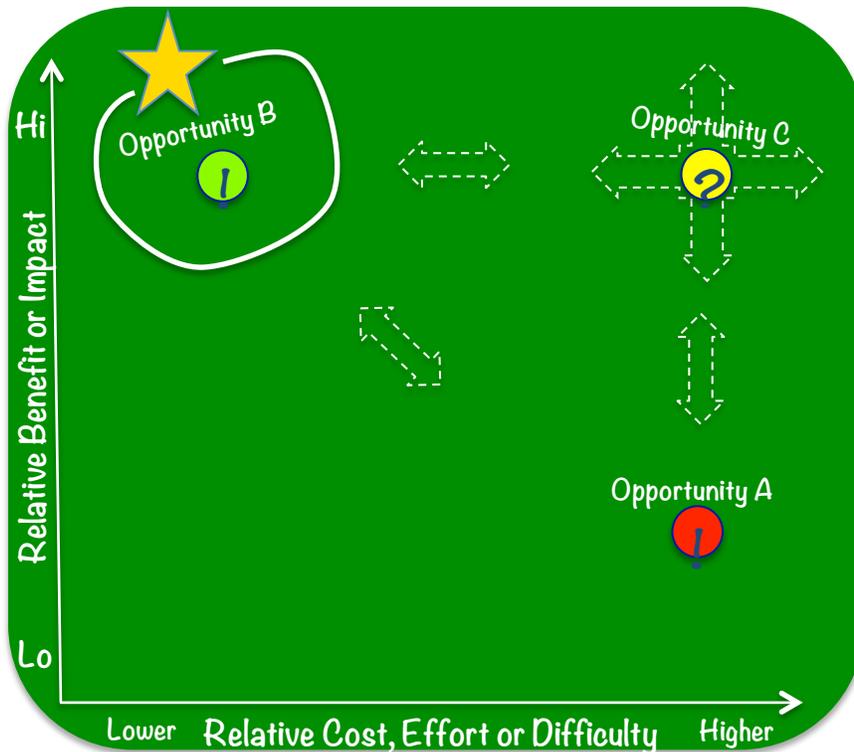


Today's Benefit/Effort analysis has its origins in the cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of Jules Dupuit that was further formalized by economist, Alfred Marshall. Since its introduction, in the time of Napoleon, it has remained a classic fixture in the decision-making tool set. We will get back later in this article to why this simple tool remains so important to continuous improvement as well as its connection to these 4 lines:



First, let's take a brief look at how Benefit/Effort analysis has adapted, and is again morphing, to meet the times.

The fundamentals have remained the same. Evaluate the relative contribution and burden of each opportunity. Compare these to that of all other opportunities and then select the opportunity/s with the best return for the least burden.



The "How", however, has more markedly changed over time. It evolved from more of a

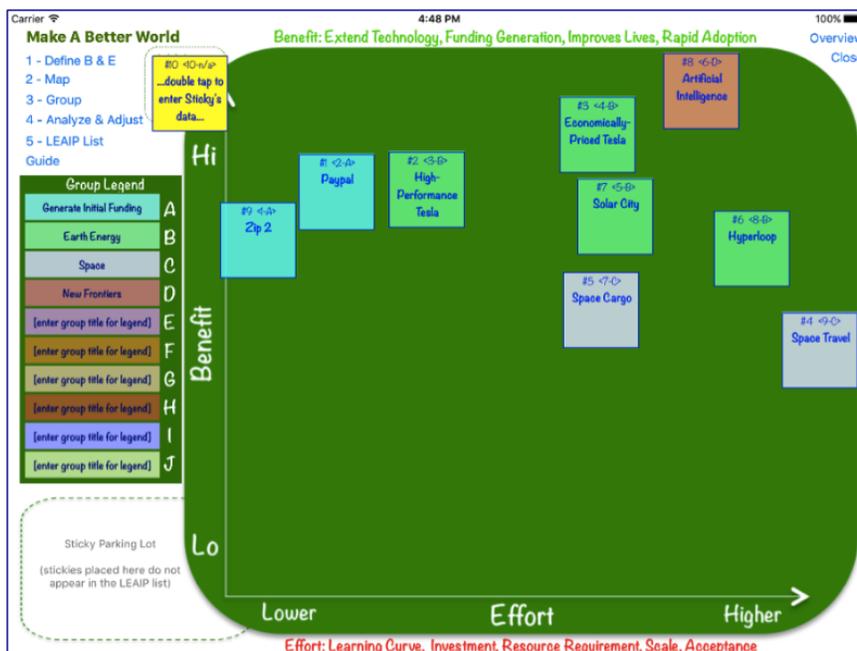
solitary analysis on a sheet of paper, to a group process around blackboards, and then whiteboards, to what is commonly seen today. Today's very visual and highly engaging process has groups performing the analysis themselves, in on-site sessions, by moving brightly covered sticky-paper notes around on a wall.

With today's discussions and working sessions increasingly centered around broad collaboration, getting valuable input from participants who may be off-site or at global locations, and getting significant results in real time, new challenges are emerging and with that, new potentials. This new environment hinges on accessibility, connectivity, agility and speed.

Gone are the days when the first step of a Benefit/Effort session was needing to rush and order another bucket full of sticky note pads and the last step was trying to rush out summary analysis from Stickies that the wind, or a cleaning person, accidentally took down overnight. Tablets using apps that cost about the same as just one pack of paper stickies, are providing some very interesting ways to build on past strengths of Benefit/Effort analysis, address the new challenges, and deliver new opportunities.

Benefit/Effort apps like LEAIP Acuity by linking the portability and connectivity of tablets with the advantages of electronic stickies and are, once again, rewriting how we do Benefit/Effort analysis. The following key features and screenshots help to illustrate how things are changing:

The screenshot below is of a Benefit/Effort session, using the LEAIP Acuity app on an iPad. It is simultaneously being projected onto a wall for local participants, and over the Internet for remote participants.



The electronic Stickies in the LEAIP Acuity session are likely to be very familiar to existing Benefit/Effort facilitators, and participants but also bring the following extended capabilities:

Touch and drag positioning - Stickies are dragged and positioned on a tablet screen according to their relative contribution (benefit) and burden (effort). The positions are instantly tracked and recorded.

Data attachment - The intelligent Stickies show a summary title, the compact size enables many opportunities to be visualized/considered simultaneously but, with a click, each Sticky can store and retrieve far more detailed information about each opportunity.

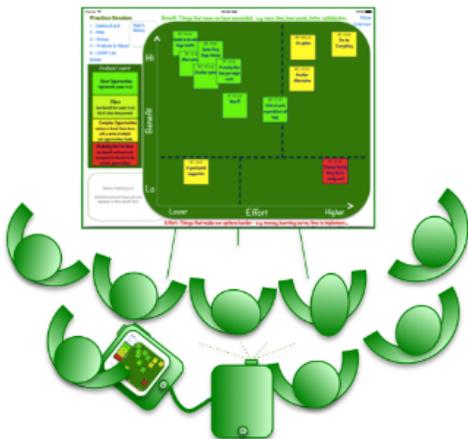
Color assignments - It is very common for several opportunities to be related in some way, such as sub-tasks of a large initiative. The color of each Sticky can be changed to visually present such groupings and associations.

Instant results - The app tracks the Stickies' positions, ranks the opportunities, and instantly generates a prioritized listing.

Session retention & sharing – Sessions are saved to the tablet device and can be instantly retrieved at a later date. Likewise, the output of any session can be instantly shared via email with participants, and stakeholders.

Scaling & Portability – The app is designed for sharing and collaboration. Large groups can work on sessions projected onto a screen from a tablet device and share the output. People located at different sites can simultaneously participate through sessions broadcast online. Individuals can equally conveniently manage their personal priorities on a personal device.

... with larger teams by connecting a tablet to a projector & projecting onto a large screen and/or an online broadcast.



...on a tablet or larger screen when working in small teams.....

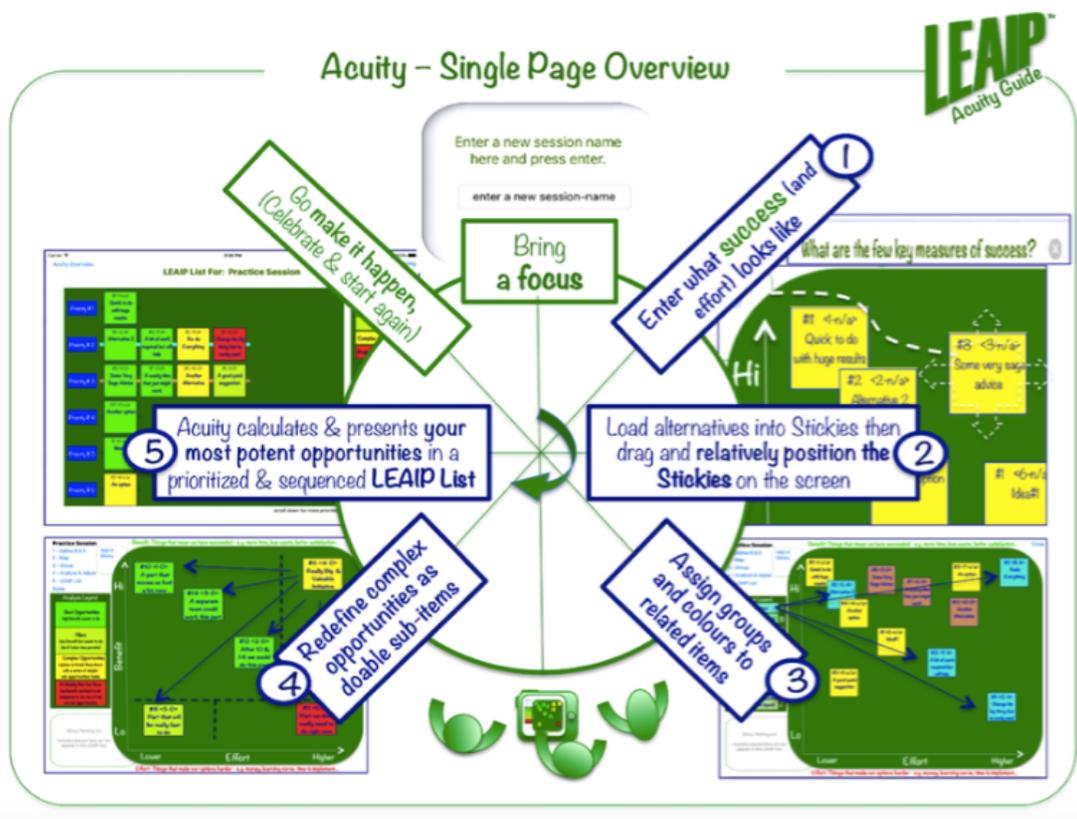


... on a tablet for individual work....



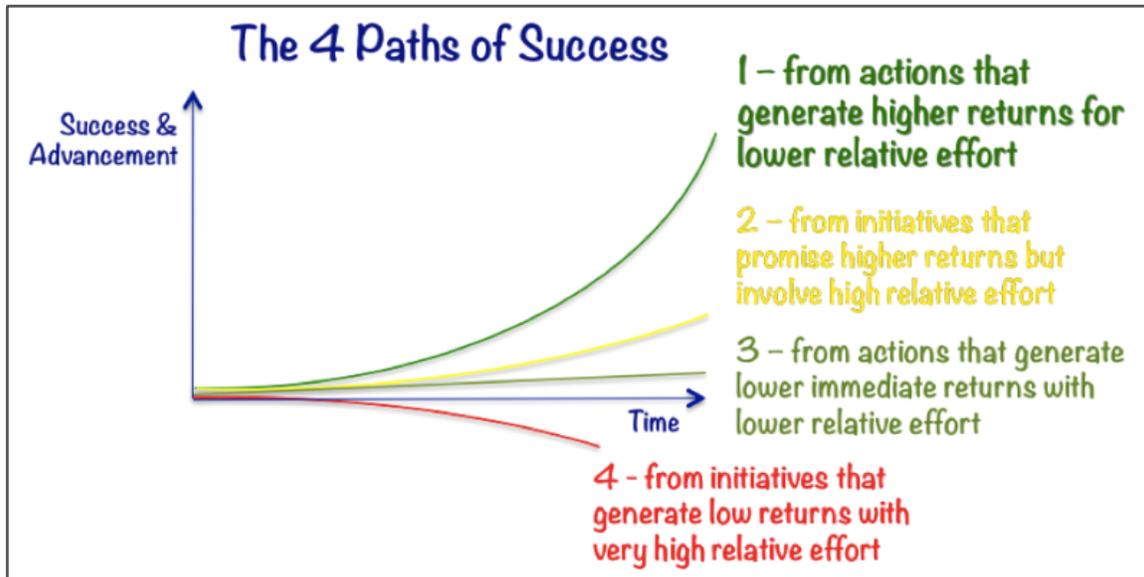
Mobility - Thanks to the hand-held design of the iPad and app, a facilitator can stand and move amongst the participants - the team is front and center.

Facilitating collaboration - Because the Acuity app takes participants through a simple standardized process, and analysis is done in a fun and visual way by simply dragging Stickies around the screen, the focus stays on a collaborative discussion amongst the situation experts – the participants



So that's a quick look at some of the technology available right now that is changing the continuous improvement game. Let's now go back to those 4 lines at the start of this article and take a look at "why all the fuss about Benefit/Effort analysis?".

The 4 simple lines represent 4 paths of success.



The **optimal path** (1) comes from a process of perpetually selecting, and realizing, greatest opportunities quickly. It requires ongoing assessment of the relative contribution and effort of a pipeline of opportunities and selecting those that bring the most success for the effort that we will put in. As the cycle continues and the success of the current best opportunity is being realized, work begins on bringing the next greatest opportunity into reality. Selecting for this path is what doing Benefit/Effort analysis is all about.

In general, the **sub-optimal paths** (2, 3, 4) result from opportunity selection approaches that don't weigh each opportunity's benefit-per-unit-of-effort against that of all other opportunities. Familiar examples of such selection processes include: multi-tasking on a multitude of opportunities, bigger is always better, squeaky wheel, most recent, oldest, personal preference, win big or nothing, next on the pile, ad hoc selection from a collection of good alternatives. Sub-optimal paths tend to be the default if no conscious choice has been made to travel the optimal path i.e. in the absence of regular Benefit/Effort analysis.

So from selecting ideas/improvements/projects, to managing a personal ToDo list, Benefit/Effort analysis remains a classic fixture in any continuous improvement or decision-making toolset for very good reason. Its highly effective simplicity continues to deliver significant success. And current technologies are once again being harnessed to help with that.

If you would like additional details, come visit us at LEAIP.com or explore [LEAIP Acuity](#) at the [App Store](#).