



The 7 Wastes that Kill Knowledge Workers



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7 Wastes of Lean

Lean manufacturing started as a way to make work more efficient by finding and getting rid of waste, reducing costs, and delivering products faster. But in recent years, the Lean approach has spread beyond manufacturing into a method for improving all kinds of work, from software development to marketing.

Lean defines waste, or *muda* (in Japanese), as any activity that doesn't add value to the final product or service. **Here's how knowledge workers can apply Lean principles and identify the 7 wastes to make their own work more efficient.**

TRANSPORTATION

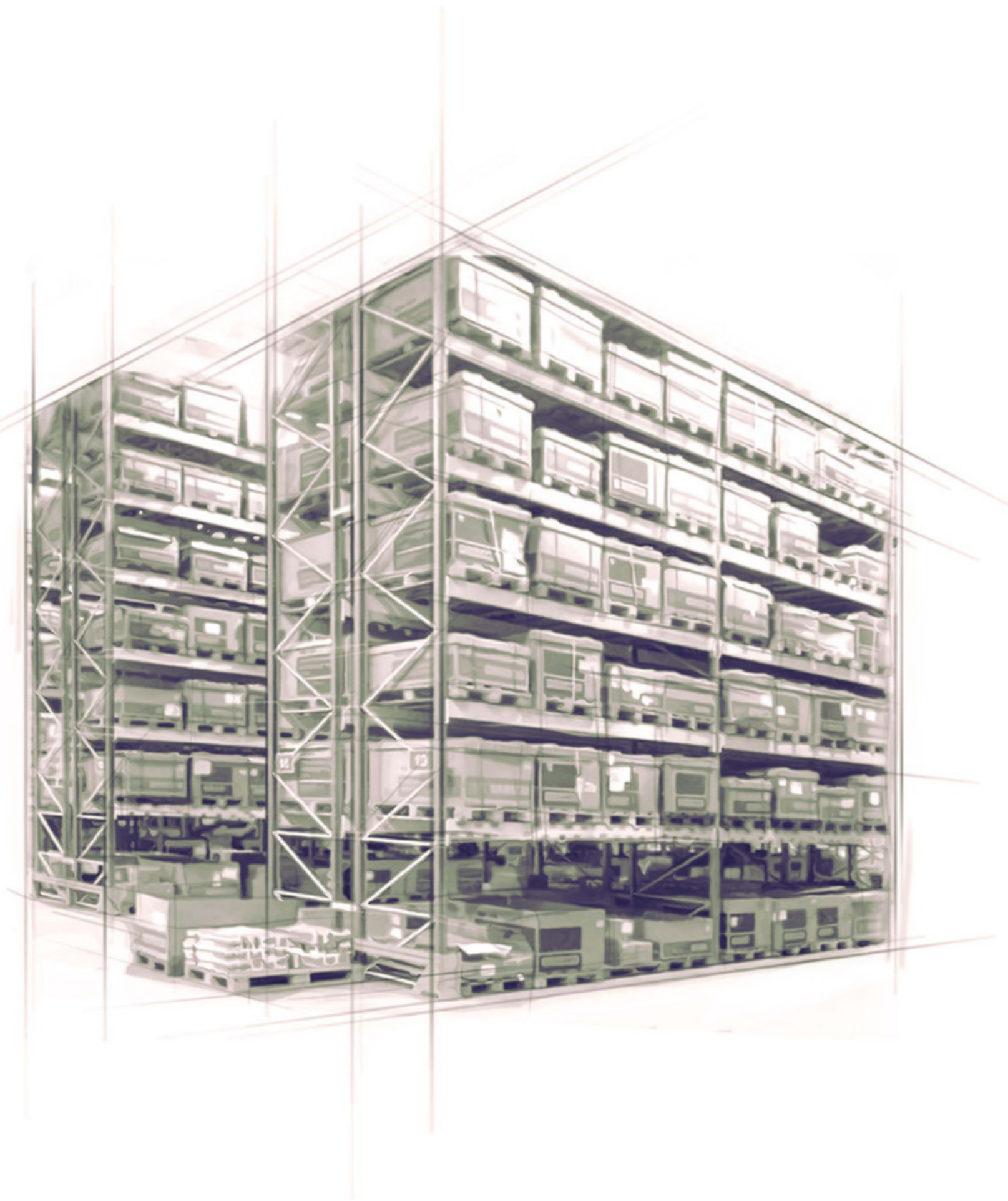
Definition:

Unnecessary movement of materials or information.

For Knowledge Workers:

Transferring information between databases, departments and tools, or needless document hand-offs.





INVENTORY

Definition:

Stocks of raw material, work in progress and finished goods.

For Knowledge Workers:

Work that gets stuck “in-progress,” or requests that accumulate in an inbox or backlog.

MOTION

Definition:

Needless movement of people.

For Knowledge Workers:

Moving around to search for information or frequent travel for meetings. Can also include navigating multiple programs, windows, or tabs with unnecessary clicks (as often happens with fragmented data repositories).





WAITING

Definition:

Delays like waiting for instructions, approval, or for work to arrive.

For Knowledge Workers:

Waiting for approval from management or on information needed to finish your task.

OVER-PROCESSING

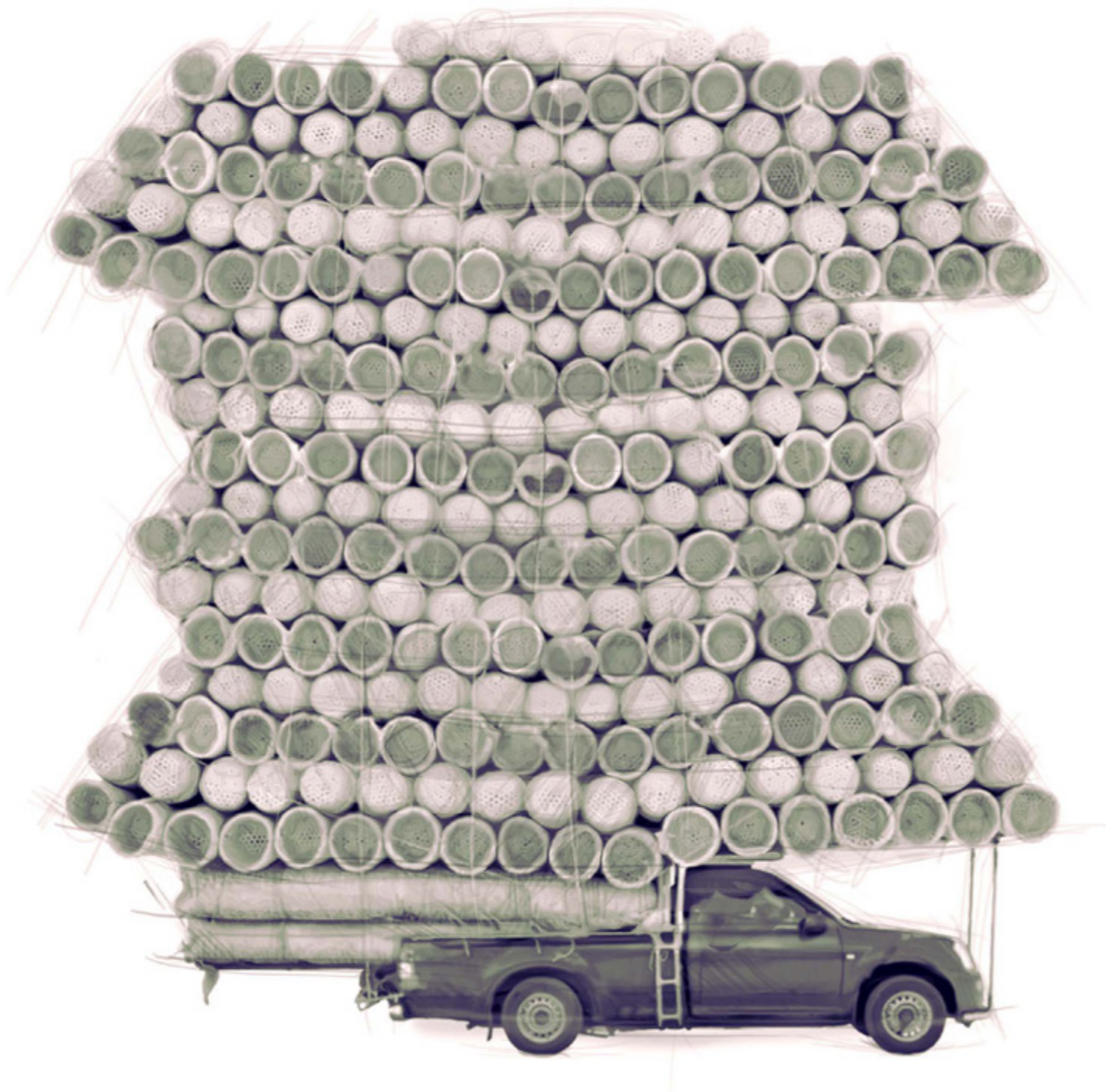
Definition:

Redundant processes, or putting more into the product than necessary.

For Knowledge Workers:

Analyzing information when only raw data is needed, or writing a polished article when only a first draft is required.





OVER-PRODUCTION

Definition:

Making a product before it's required or in excess quantity.

For Knowledge Workers:

Producing deliverables the customer hasn't requested.
Or, the "Completed" queue is too long and work becomes
obsolete before it's delivered.

DEFECTS

Definition:

Products or services that don't meet customer requirements.

For Knowledge Workers:

Work that needs to be reworked after being delivered to the customer, or unplanned iterations and revisions.



To make your work more efficient,
ask yourself these three questions:

What is the purpose of my work?

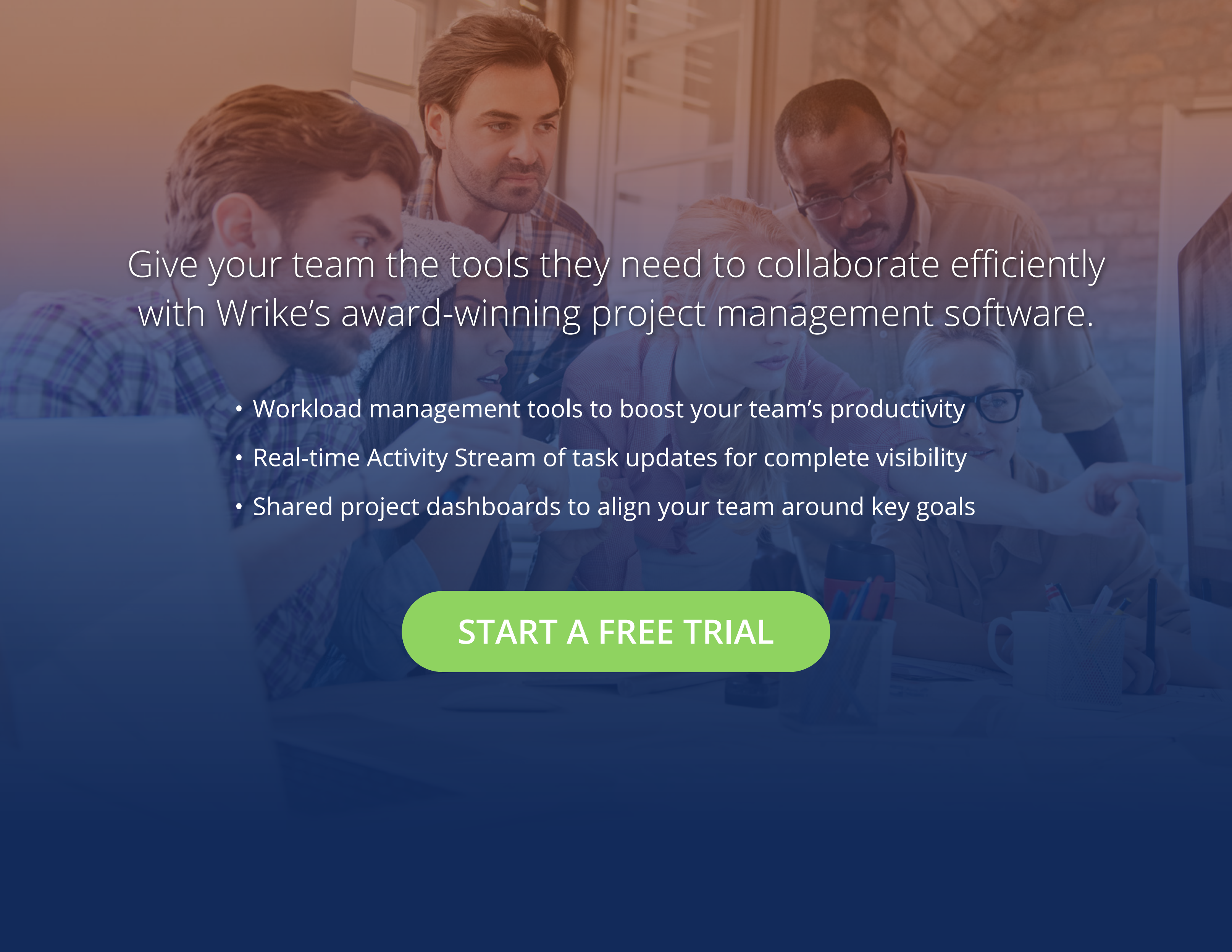
Who am I generating value for?

What is the appropriate process to generate
the best work in the most efficient way?

Once you discover potential areas of waste in your work,
look for ways to remove or reduce these wastes
for you or your team.

For a complete guide to the 7 wastes, plus more tips
for improving your work processes,
watch this [video](#) from our productivity coach Errette Dunn.
And for more Lean lessons, visit us at wrike.com/blog!





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