**1. Defining Lead Time Versus Processing Time**

Lead time is from the very beginning to the very end, while processing time is from the beginning of when actual work starts. Lead time is essentially the same as when someone requests a file or public record until they receive it, versus the processing time, which would be the time when the work is assigned or taken on by someone who works there until the requester receives it.

**2. The Common Scenario: Deployment Lead Times Requiring Months**

In many traditional IT or development environments, getting new code or updates into production can take weeks or even months. This usually happens because there are a lot of handoffs, approvals, and delays between steps.  
For example, developers might finish writing code quickly, but then it must go through separate testing teams, operations teams, and management sign-offs before it’s finally deployed. Each step adds waiting time.  
So, even though the **actual work** (like writing or testing the code) might take just a few days, the overall lead time stretches to months because of all the bottlenecks and manual processes in between.

**3. Our DevOps Ideal: Deployment Lead Times of Minutes**

The DevOps goal is to **reduce that total lead time drastically** — ideally to **minutes**.  
Instead of waiting on manual approvals and handoffs, DevOps teams use **automation, continuous integration (CI), and continuous deployment (CD)** pipelines. That means once the code passes tests, it can be automatically deployed to production almost immediately.  
The idea is that every small change or update should move from development to deployment quickly, safely, and repeatedly — sometimes even dozens of times a day.  
This makes teams more agile, improves feedback speed, and allows organizations to respond to customer needs faster.