

Lean Learning Center presents

LEAN PROGRESS

Doing More with Less

Ideas for helping your company transition to lean effectively and rapidly

By Jamie Flinchbaugh

What's your definition of lean? There are many. Personally, I think you shouldn't focus too much energy on developing definitions. Perhaps the most common definition, however is "doing more with less." It's cute, short and to the point. It says a lot, but still leaves a little to the imagination.

What do you hear when you see that definition? Most organizations hear "with less". Particularly through the latest economic downturn, many organizations have been focused on reducing costs and even reducing their overall organization including their assets and people. This might be a situation you find yourself in.

Because you have been particularly focused on cutting and saving recently, it is easy to focus on lean being about less. I believe people are focused more on the "less" part of that definition. This of course is important because "less" is where you get the cost down and the waste out of the system. Numerous lean methods are designed primarily for this purpose such as waste walk, kaizen events, standardized work, and most

value stream mapping efforts. But the "more" part of that statement is equally important. It is "doing more". So what is the more. It should be defined as providing more value, having more capabilities, and being stronger. The true vision of lean should not be stripped down, it should be strength.

In the human body, lean is not the model that is skin and bones. Think of the image of the supermodel or Hollywood starlet. Yes, there is very little fat, but that doesn't make it healthy. Instead, the example should be the Olympic swimmer or gymnast. This is a person who is built for purpose and performance. It is also low in fat, but it is very healthy. It is very strong.

Consider the same difference for your organization. Build your organization for performance. Focus on how you can provide more value for your customers, both inside and outside the organization. Focus on how you can build more capabilities, more skills, more robust processes.

One way you can do this is to turn your waste into value. Consider the lumber industry as an example. For centuries

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Doing More with Less (Cont'd)

really, creating lumber produced a wasteful byproduct of sawdust and wood chips. However, through innovation, this throwaway was turned into value-added products such as particleboard and wood pellets for stoves. Look at the waste streams. What can you salvage that can provide value?

Another way is to consider your organizational capabilities. Perhaps the only truly sustainable competitive advantage is your intellectual capital or people capa-

bilities. Are you fully developing these? Every project and every improvement that has a performance objective could also have a learning objective. Maybe you reduced some cost, but you also grew the capabilities of a person. If you manage learning objectives, you can build new strength while taking out waste.

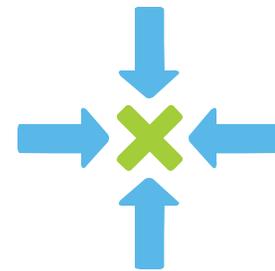
Lean is "doing more with less" but it is both sides of this equation that really matter.

Lean Quick Tip

A good meeting is energizing, productive, focused. But of course most of the meetings that organizations hold are frustrating, unproductive, and wasteful. Here are two quick tips.

First, consider if you even need the meeting to begin with, or question how much value is being provided. At the end of the meeting, do the "value added" math. If there are 8 people in the room and you have that meeting every day for an hour, that's the equivalent of 1 full time employee. Ask the group "was that worth 1 full time employee?" If not, then it must be changed or cancelled. Try the latter first.

Second, schedule meetings for odd times. People will think about time a little more precisely and thoughtfully. Thanks to Microsoft and Outlook, every



meeting is an hour unless you consciously change it. Consider making meetings for 15 minutes, 25, 50, 80 - anything that doesn't fit into the normal flow. First, you'll allow people transition time from one place to another. Second, people will think carefully about how 25 minutes will be spend instead of just consuming time.



“Lean is "doing more with less" but it is both sides of this equation that really matter.”

Houston, Do We Have a Problem?



We all have been taught and have used many different problem solving methodologies. All are aimed at the same objective, which is to find the root cause of the problem so that countermeasures can be taken to eliminate the problem from ever happening again. What's curious about what we've been taught about problem solving is that too often we race past a critical fundamental issue—how did we know we had a problem in the first place?

Many of us work in processes and activities that are largely unstructured with poorly defined or nonexistent standards in terms of expected outputs. Without well structured, standardized processes and clearly defined process outputs, it is impossible to determine whether an abnormality or deviation from expectation has occurred. It literally becomes a subjective determination as to when a problem exists.

Before we jump into problem solving, we should address this fundamental issue. The problem solving team should first go and see the problem where it occurred and ask two simple questions. First, is the expected output of this activity or process

obvious to everyone? Second, can it be quickly determined when a deviation from this expected output has occurred? If the answer to either of these questions is no, then the first action in the problem solving approach should be to address these issues.

There are many lean tools that make process errors easily detectable. Visual management and error-proofing are two of the most obvious. At the principle level, we are trying to build work environments with a lens of creating high agreement on how things should work. This applies in any process, whether we're dealing with manufacturing processes or product development activities.

Failure to build high agreement on when a problem exists can be costly. Because we don't rapidly detect when a problem exists, the probability is much higher of producing significant defects over a longer period of time, resulting in a lot of rework. Also, we take the decision making in terms of stopping the process and fixing the problem away from those closest to the point of activity. Usually the problem is not detected until it impacts some downstream activity, far removed from those who could have dealt with the problem quickly.

The next time you are working on Step 1 of a problem solving effort, make certain that Step 0 has been addressed and it is clear to everyone when a problem has occurred. Then everyone can agree, "Houston, we have a problem!"

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How Do I Make Time to ‘Do Lean’?

As organizations and teams begin their lean journey, often someone will ask the question “How do I find the time to do lean and my routine work”? The quick answer to this question is “Just do it”. Skill and benefit come with practice. Just getting started will overcome the barriers of waiting until it can be done perfectly or waiting on just the “right opportunity” before beginning. Beyond “just do it”, consider using lean as a mechanism to improve those areas that require organization energy and routine focus. Check off these opportunities to use lean instead of routine methods to improve.

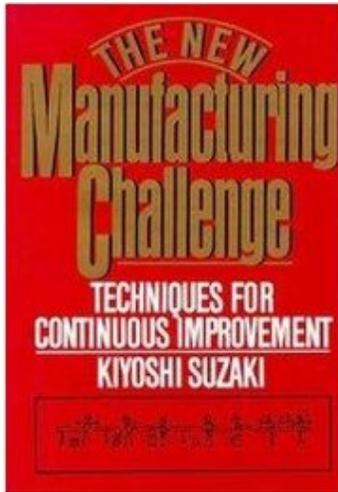
Consider these quick tips to create more time in your 2010 calendar to ‘do lean’

- As you consider priority opportunities for 2010, how have you included lean tools to drive and sustain performance challenges?
- Have you asked your team to focus on a specific process to identify and solve wastes they see while working? These ideas may be captured real time at the work station on a waste audit sheet or on a “Plan-Do-Check-Act Rapid Improvement” card. Facilitate actions to address the opportunities.
- Ask your team how they used lean today and how they plan to use lean tomorrow. Ask them in their work area, not in a meeting.

You want to set aside time for direct observation or to coach your team in the use of lean. Your calendar is driven by meetings. Here are a few tips to help you remove the waste from meetings:

- **Staff meetings — Have a standard agenda. Give each staff member a set number of minutes. Bring stop watches to the meeting to monitor adherence to the budgeted time. Staff members may “borrow” minutes if needed from others who may not require the full allocation.**
- **Staff meetings — Have some fun testing the value-add of the information. Give meeting attendees poker chips to vote “value-add” for each topic. Black indicates high value-add, green indicates moderate value-add and white indicates low value-add.**
- **All meetings — Stand up. Meet in or near the place where work occurs. Use visual scoreboards in the work areas as centers for communication.**

“The New Manufacturing Challenge” Book Review



The New Manufacturing Challenge: Techniques for Continuous Improvement

By James P. Womack and Daniel T. Jones

Book Description: What’s the key message?

The book is an introduction to continuous improvement in manufacturing, with an emphasis on the shop floor. It works for the beginner, with a minimum of jargon or Japanese terminology. It encompasses all the basic techniques of what we now call lean manufacturing with an action-oriented approach. The first chapter focuses on eliminating waste with not only definitions but examples or cases on the elimination of waste. Chapters 2 through 12 focus on the tools and application of lean, including a cursory overview of 5S, setup reduction, developing flow with a particular focus on process layout, skill development and multi-

process handling, process analysis and improvement, jidoka, andon, poke-yoke, preventive maintenance, leveled production, standard work, kanban and even conveyors. While none of these are covered in great depth, the reader will understand what and why with a dose of how. The remainder of the book covers more broad issues than tools such as supplier engagement, total versus local optimization and people engagement. Some of the insights in these chapters are only 15-20 years later becoming well understood. Overall, this book paints a picture of shop-floor driven and focused continuous improvement on a daily basis that engages both all employees and the tools and techniques of lean.

How does it contribute to the lean knowledge base?

There is nothing in “The New Manufacturing Challenge” that is not covered well in other books. Suzuki himself notes this in his introduction. The book’s simplicity is an advantage and as a result it was well used as a teaching tool by many organizations, contributing to its longevity. And although the numerous examples drawn from many companies around the world date from the 1980s, they still convey new ideas for many readers. At the time of its release there was probably no other book as broad and practical at applying lean. And its ability to capture the human element of lean was left unmatched for many years.

“It works for the beginner, with a minimum of jargon or Japanese terminology. It encompasses all the basic techniques of what we now call lean manufacturing with an action-oriented approach.”

“The New Manufacturing Challenge” Book Review (Cont.)

What are the highlights? What works?

The book works its way through the lean toolbox, showing how the tools are used and how they fit together. The language and examples are simple, and accessible to anyone willing to take the time to read it.

The book is notable for Suzaki’s use of visual representations of the concepts he means to convey. Not everyone learns well from written text, and not everyone reading a written text takes the time to fully concentrate on what it is saying. Suzaki’s stick people effectively show how work can be improved. He also uses simple graphics to illustrate concepts such as the difference between batch and mixed model production.

“Sustaining lean gains is notoriously difficult.”

Many subtleties that took many years for others to discover and absorb are captured throughout the book. Many of these key points are lost on a generally inexperienced reader, but the concepts hold up over time and reflects the depth of lean principles.

What are the weaknesses? What’s missing?

Like any broad introduction, the book can give an explanation and a few illustrations and ideas on a range of subjects, but cannot go much further. Also, the beginning reader won’t find the standard Japanese lexicon, and may struggle a bit to connect terms he or she has heard with some

of the concepts in the book. The age of the examples means that some companies may no longer be performing well, or may even have gone out of business. That shouldn’t affect the credibility of the book, however. Sustaining lean gains is notoriously difficult.

How should I read this to get the most out of it?

The book is simple enough to read straight through but the reader should go back and spend more time with the illustrations and diagrams. Rereading sections periodically would be a good idea as well – especially if you read it some years ago. You could also skip around instead of reading chapters sequentially as the topics and structure is pretty modular.

If you want to use the book as a training tool, there are a couple of options. One is the reading group approach. Taking a chapter a week, all the members of the group are charged with reading it and the group discusses it together. The applicability of the chapters 1-12 makes this effective. Individual members of the group might take turns leading discussion in successive weeks.

Suzaki also made a video series with the Society of Manufacturing Engineers. It includes factory footage and interview-style discussion of the topics. It is 3.75 hours and comes with an instructor’s guide and workbooks for a price of \$1,110.

What Are Your Top Priorities for Lean Engagement in 2010?



We conducted an informal polling of members of the Lean Learning Center's LinkedIn site to gauge where lean leaders would be focusing their lean transformation efforts in 2010. To see more results, read more comments, and participate in the survey, visit:

<http://polls.linkedin.com/poll-results/69127/mzkyf>

A few comments from those that participated:

-Some interesting results. "By Age" is the most intriguing. Everyone in the younger group is looking to better connect business needs where the older group has to do with improving education. Does this have to do with the younger group learning more right away or in school and being more open? Whereas the older group might want to learn more before changing and have been in the workforce longer so

some of the educational opportunities aren't as available?

-Engagement...do leaders really know what it means? Some confuse it with commitment. Question: How do you know that the leader is engaged?

-We're spending a lot of time with our front-line workers to teach them how to recognize problems, then use problem-solving techniques to solve them. Very promising results so far.

Join the Lean Learning Center's LinkedIn group to connect and gain insights with other lean leaders



Agency Provides a *Lean* Way to Help Those in Need

We are all too familiar with the impact the downturn in our economy has caused. We see it at work; we see it in our communities. We feel it personally. There is help from various public and private sources but sometimes navigating the “system” can be frustrating, at best. 2-1-1 is a *leaner* way to find help. The national nonprofit organization is a 3 digit telephone hotline that assists callers by providing crisis intervention, assessment and referrals to community health and human service programs by maintaining a database of information that can be easily accessed by telephone or the internet.

As of November 2009, 2-1-1 serves over 241 million Americans (more than 80% of the entire population) covering all or part of 47 states (including 34 states with 90%+ coverage) plus Wash-

ington DC and Puerto Rico. The remaining states are all in various stages of planning and implementation. That means that wherever you are calling from, dialing 2-1-1 will link you with a database of resources in your community--and it's available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, free of charge and confidential.

Lean Learning Center (LLC) supports the mission of 2-1-1 on the Palm Beach/Treasure Coast of Florida, near LLC's home office. That agency also serves as a vital resource for H1N1 information, updates for hurricane preparation and recovery, the increasing numbers of homeless families, and more recently, returning veterans from Iraq and Afganistan.

Visit <http://211us.org/about.htm>

Lean Learning Center (LLC) supports the mission of 2-1-1 on the Palm Beach/Treasure Coast of Florida, near LLC's home office.

Happy New Year from the Lean Learning Center!

With all of the economic uncertainties, this past year has certainly provided many challenges for us all. The Lean Learning Center is grateful for all of our friends, clients, and colleagues that have helped us in so many ways in 2009.

We wish everyone a very healthy, prosperous 2010 and hope you have great success in continuing your lean journey!



The Beer Game

Is your organization getting the results that it is seeking? Every organization experiences undesirable results, but few truly understand what actions are required to implement change and obtain desirable and sustainable results.

The Lean Learning Center's beer supply chain simulation has been carefully designed to illustrate the impact that systems, subsystems and other contributing factors have on organizational results. Fun encourages learning as participants are fully immersed into the simulation and fulfill the role of Factory, Distributor, Wholesaler or Retailer within the beer supply chain. Participants work strategically to fulfill their customer orders while keeping their weekly operational costs low.

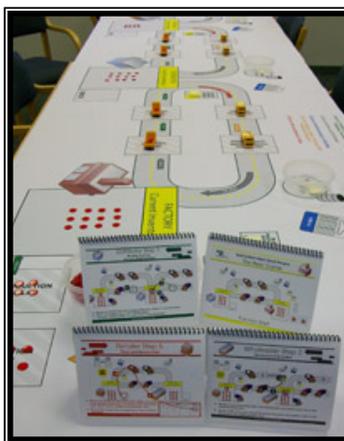
Participants will experience firsthand the ineffectiveness of firefighting problems while running their supply chain operation and upon review of their final results. Strategies for analyzing the intricacies of systems that cannot be easily seen at the surface level are exposed during an interactive and dynamic debrief. Participants will understand that better results will only be realized by addressing opportunities and problems at the system level.

The training package will accommodate up to 16 participants and includes:

- One spiral-bound facilitator guide with detailed facilitation and debrief guidance.

- Participant Lean Systems Primer take-away reference in 3 sizes (8.5" x 11", legal, 11" x 17") for easy reproduction.
- Presentation slides in Power Point format.
- Two full color supply chain game boards made of durable vinyl that resist permanent creases, clean easily and are conveniently sized to fit 2 standard folding tables (30" x 144").
- Two colors of durable plastic chips that illustrate cases of beer moving to customers.
- Two complete sets of spiral-bound supply chain visual aids that illustrate game steps for every supply chain position.
- Two sets of pre-determined order cards that specify customer demand for the Retailer.
- USB drive with all instructional materials provided as editable Word files.

To learn more about the Beer Game and how it can be used for your lean program, visit the product section of the Lean Learning Center website: www.leanlearningcenter.com



“Participants will experience firsthand the ineffectiveness of firefighting problems while running their supply chain operation and upon review of their final results.”

Lean Learning Center Announcements

Lean Value Stream Improvement

October 25, 2010

Lean Experience

January 25, 2010

March 15, 2010

May 17, 2010

July 26, 2010

September 13, 2010

November 1, 2010

December 13, 2010

Leading Lean

May 12, 2010

October 27, 2010

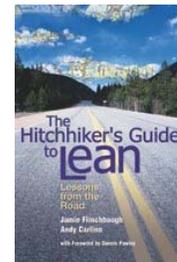
Lean Kaizen Boot Camp

September 27, 2010



For more information visit:

www.hitchhikersguidetolean.com



For more visit
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The Lean Learning Center is one of the most recognized and premier lean consultancies in the world. With on-site assessment and consulting at client locations, an adult-learning-designed Center in Michigan and custom curriculum developed through an Instructional Design Studio, the Center brings unique lean understanding in creative ways to executives, managers, supervisors, change agents and front-line employees at clients including many Fortune 500 companies in a range of industries. The company combines consulting expertise and a unique learning environment with educational techniques that facilitate discovery to drive cultural and organizational transformation resulting in maximum sustained performance.