

Improvement Initiatives

Quotable Quote:

"Understanding human needs is half the job of **meeting** them." – *Adlai E. Stevenson*

December 2010

Conduct a “Stand Up” Meeting by Joseph Vitanza

L-o-n-g winded meetings that accomplish little are probably the biggest single problem in many organizations today. They are significant time killers and they can become very de-motivating for an otherwise energized workforce.

I've tried all the "proven" strategies such as time limits, facilitators, agendas, etc. and even a Task Force assigned to finally fix this problem! Yet the problems with meetings persisted. That convinced me that the people who complain the loudest about unproductive meetings are the ones who actually perpetuate the practice.

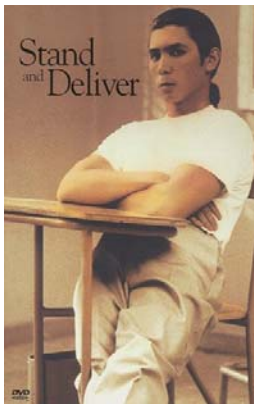
Think about it, if you want to find a place to relax for an hour, just go to a meeting! You can escape from the daily grind of operations, and if you're lucky, you can even get a cup of coffee, or maybe even a free lunch! I think the only way to solve this problem is to eliminate conference room meetings altogether.

Try this instead: Stand and Deliver!

Go out to a suitable area of the workplace and have a gathering of the key personnel. More often than not, you're meeting to discuss a problem, and what better place to do this than where the problem is occurring? You'll get to see and touch and feel the issue first hand, and the rest of the organization will actually see you doing something constructive, which will be a motivational tool. The participants will be standing and not escaping to a comfortable conference room chair, so I can almost guarantee that the meeting will be a whole lot shorter.

Compiling meeting minutes may be a problem, but let's be honest, who really reads them anyway?

Conscientious people don't need minutes to remind them of what they need to do. I know this proposal may sound a bit pessimistic, but give it shot; because all you have to lose is a continuing stream of boring meetings.



Learn more at: <http://www.effectivemeetings.com/teams/teamwork/creighton.asp>

One Light Bulb at A Time by Albert J. Perotti, III

A physics teacher in high school, once told the students that while one grasshopper on the railroad tracks wouldn't slow a train very much, a billion of them would. With that thought in mind, read the following - obviously written by a good American.

Good idea ... one light bulb at a time ...

Check this out. I can verify this because I was in Lowes the other day for some reason and just for the heck of it I was looking at the hose attachments. They were all made in China. The next day I was in Ace Hardware and just for the heck of it I checked the hose attachments there. They were made in the USA. Start looking ...

In our current economic situation, every little thing we buy or do affects someone else - even their job.

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One Light Bulb at A Time *by Albert J. Perotti, III*

So, after reading this email, I think this lady is on the right track. Let's get behind her! My grandson likes Hershey's candy. I noticed, though, that it is marked made in Mexico now... I do not buy it any more. My favorite toothpaste Colgate is made in Mexico ... now I have switched to Crest. You have to read the labels on everything...

This past weekend I was at Kroger. I needed 60Watt light bulbs and Bounce dryer sheets. I was in the light bulb aisle, and right next to the GE brand I normally buy was an off-brand labeled, "Everyday Value." I picked up both types of bulbs and compared the stats - they were the same except for the price ... The GE bulbs were more money than the Everyday Value brand but the thing that surprised me the most was the fact that GE was made in MEXICO and the Everyday Value brand was made in - get ready for this - the USA in a company in Cleveland, Ohio.



So throw out the myth that you cannot find products you use every day that are made right here!

So on to another aisle - Bounce Dryer Sheets ... yep, you guessed it, bounce cost more money and is made in Canada. The Everyday Value brand was less money and MADE IN THE USA! I did laundry yesterday and the dryer sheets performed just like the Bounce Free I have been using for years and at almost half the price!

My challenge to you is to start reading the labels when you shop for everyday things and see what you can find that is made in the USA - the job you save may be your own or your neighbors!

If you accept the challenge, pass this on to others so we can all start buying American, one light bulb at a time! Stop buying from overseas companies! (We should have awakened a decade ago...)

Let's get with the program . . . help our fellow Americans keep their jobs and create more jobs here in the U.S.A.

Mr. Watson's Opus



- Jay Watson

WOW! As we start our second year of the free lean site, I can't believe the positive reception and support we've received. We are presently experiencing over 1,000 "visits" and 30,000 "hits" a month, so our DIY message is getting out there. Please continue using the materials and tell a colleague about the site. Continue pushing Safety, Quality, and Speed of Execution initiatives forward. Thank you for supporting our sponsors! P.S. - *Wishing you a very productive New Year.*

Here's 5 Tips to Manage Your Manager

by Jenna Goudreau, from FORBES Magazine (Used w/ permission)

When the job market falters, many employees try to stay below the boss's radar for fear they might be next on the chopping block. However, it's far wiser to take the opposite approach.

Now more than ever, it's important to be noticed (though for the right reasons, of course), explains Tina Chen, a director of permanent and temporary staffing firm Carlisle Staffing in Illinois. "When companies trim staff, they will save the people who stand out because they manage their managers well," says Chen. "There are also more temporary workers now who could manage upward to get hired."

So instead of being the good-enough team member the boss has trouble remembering, use these tricks to become noticed and indispensable.

1. Understand your boss

"Managing upward requires empathy," says Aaron Nurick, professor of management and psychology at Bentley University in Waltham, Mass. Nurick believes that the key to success is being able to see the world from your manager's perspective.

Instead of becoming frustrated by the boss, observe her work style and communication preferences, and then adapt. You may be flooding the boss with emails while she finds it easier to speak via phone. Subtle adjustments on your part will make her job easier--which makes you look better.

You should also read your manager's reactions to the way you present information, says Nurick. For example, you may work for someone who loves numbers and has little patience for more abstract thinking. In that case, try presenting your boss with a quantitative analysis first, and then succinctly explain its impact. Notice, too, if your boss prefers being asked questions or given answers. Decide if you should cut to the chase or soften your opinion by adding, "Would you agree?"

2. Stay three steps ahead

Staffing expert Chen says that dealing with a boss can be like a game of chess. "Always stay three steps ahead of your opponent, and take the lead," she advises. Employees who anticipate their boss's needs *before* they arise will be seen as leaders and problem solvers.

Once you understand and start to think like your boss, you'll be in a better position to take initiative. Let's say, says Chen, you're asked to find a person's contact information because your boss is working on an insurance policy renewal. Respond by saying, "Yes I have his information, and would you like me to follow up with him regarding the renewal?"

"For every action there's a reaction and then another action to follow," Chen explains. In other words, anticipate additional questions or requests and handle them *before* you're asked.

3. Be the better half

Become indispensable by learning your manager's weaknesses and complimenting them with your strengths.

Perhaps your boss is a brilliant visionary but impossibly disorganized. Rather than griping about how difficult she is to work with, make up for what she lacks by taking on the role of organizer. Suggest deadlines, remind her of appointments, and follow up on items she's forgotten. Not only will you have gained your boss's trust, you'll become the most valued member of her team.

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Here's 5 Tips to Manage Your Manager (continued...)

4. Don't be afraid to speak up

Career expert and coauthor of *Crucial Conversations* Kerry Patterson says most employees are afraid to approach their managers about issues with their work style. In a survey he conducted, 50 percent of employees said they'd left a company because of a disagreeable boss, but only one in five had spoken with the boss about their concerns.

Patterson says the most common frustrations that employees face are micromanaging bosses and absentee bosses. Yet they rarely speak up. "People think it's risky to address these problems, but if it's handled professionally, it increases your boss's opinion of you," he says.

When initiating a tough conversation, Patterson suggests that you offer an example of a specific behavior, explain how it made you feel, and then ask for the manager's perspective.

Here's an example of what you might say: "Last week you checked in three times on a routine project. It made me feel as if you didn't trust my ability to handle it. Is that the case?" This formula opens the door to an honest conversation without the manager feeling attacked. Patterson emphasizes that it's important to point out specific *behaviors* and not characteristics of your manager, so that he doesn't take offense.

5. Ask for more responsibility

If you want to ensure a path to the top, Chen says you should make an impression with the even higher-ups--your manager's managers. Allow yourself to shine but don't overstep your boundaries, she warns. Your immediate boss controls your projects and promotions, so you need to maintain his trust.

A great way to gain an audience with company leaders is to ask for more responsibility. Identify a big project that you're confident you can handle, and then pour yourself into it to show what you can do. Another handy trick: Offer to head up an initiative. Maybe you become the resident expert on new software or organize a company event. Suddenly, people come to you with questions and view you as a leader.

Free Form!

Free A3 form

<http://www.coe.montana.edu/IE/faculty/sobek/A3/report.htm>

Much more than just a tool, A3 Problem Solving is a simple method to systematically:

1. Define and solve problems
2. Teach managers how to better coach, mentor, and lead
3. Instill a way of thinking that causes entire teams of people to sharply focus their minds on the foundational Lean ways of seeing process flows and wastes - constantly redirecting their attention back to the foundational Lean Enterprise principles

Learn more at:

<http://www.systems2win.com/LK/kaizen/A3.htm>

A CLOSER LOOK: PUTTING LSS TOOLS IN PERSPECTIVE

- by R.Schweiger

Much as been written about the use and misuse of the quality tools available to management and the quality community, but I still worry when I see phrases like "Six Sigma deployment" and "Lean out the organization".

For me Lean concepts or tools, the Six-Sigma approach to improvement and problem solving, or any of the other numerous methods and approaches we have available to us, such as process-focused management, SPC, Theory of Constraints, proper statistical analysis, etc., are simply tools to be used when and where appropriate. However, there may be a number of factors that get in the way of that.

One might be the number of practitioners or consultants that (only) know "Lean Six Sigma" and for the person that only has a hammer, everything looks like a nail. The rise of the interest in Six Sigma or Lean may be due to the "flavor of the month" problem, and that management seems too often want a quick fix to appease Wall Street. Further, there seems to be this idea that an organization can be "Lean" or can adopt Six Sigma as a "management philosophy", going so far as to use 6S as a kind of prep school for their future executives.



I think we need to put these tools into proper perspective, and put them as welcome arrows in our quality management quiver, ready to be taken out and used when the situation demands.

The other issue is one of management approach, and when the wrong approaches are taken, then ills occur. We need to clearly understand and communicate to employees the value of the "gift of time" as Andrew Milivojevch of the Knowledge Management Group (www.tkmg.org) states. We use these tools to increase productivity and not only reduce waste, but to give us the ability to innovate, to think, to train, to engage in projects, and to give us the organizational flexibility to handle changes in demand when needed. Using Lean, or any improvement tool, should never be seen as merely a way to simply reduce the workforce.

Using Six Sigma in an organization to execute meaningful projects is an excellent way to engage employees, show them that they matter, value them, and drive out fear when the improvement does not result in a wave of firings, but an opportunity to increase revenue/output with the same number of people. Constancy of purpose, investment in happy employees, understanding your business through process management and measurement, understanding variation, and knowing your customer are all key things that need management focus. The quality tools and approaches we have at our disposal should never pervert or override these long-term goals. Taking any one of them to the extreme is never healthy.

A Safeguarding Process

- by Russ Wood

Accidents can happen at any time, and often where they are least expected. They come from two primary sources, operator misjudgments and equipment hazards. Sufficient operator training can reduce the first type, and well-designed equipment can take care of the second. *A risk assessment, reduction planning, and safety integration program secures the best possible working environment for the health and safety of your employees.*

Step 1. Identify Candidate Machines and Processes

Step 2. Collect Accurate Information

Step 3. Assemble Appropriate Individuals

Step 4. Observe Machines in Use

Step 5. Identify Hazardous Areas

Step 6. Identify the Risk Level

Step 7. Evaluate the Risk Level

Step 8. Create an Appropriate Risk Reduction System

Step 9. Accurately Estimate System Costs

Step 10. Provide All Required Services and Materials

Step 11. Conduct Follow-Up Risk Assessment

Step 12. Process Closeout and Sign-Off

Follow Up

Maintain a safe system with follow-up training sessions to upgrade employee skills. Join forces with an outside safety integration specialist to review existing safeguards, create new specifications to ensure compliance, assist in device selection, and provide impartial review of compliance with applicable standards.

Learn more at:
www.sti.com/news/risk-assessment.htm

14 Lean Principles

Principle 1

- *Base your management decisions on a long-term philosophy, even at the expense of short-term financial goals.*

People need purpose to find motivation and establish goals.

Principle 2

- *Create a continuous process flow to bring problems to the surface.*

Work processes are redesigned to eliminate waste ([muda](#)) through the process of continuous improvement — [kaizen](#). The seven types of muda are:

1. Overproduction
2. Waiting (time on hand)
3. Unnecessary transport or conveyance
4. Overprocessing or incorrect processing
5. Excess inventory
6. Motion
7. Defects

Principle 3

- *Use "pull" systems to avoid overproduction.*

A method where a process signals its predecessor that more material is needed. The pull system produces only the required material after the subsequent operation signals a need for it. This process is necessary to reduce overproduction.

Learn more about Toyota at: <http://cs.dut.ac.za/emgt4/EngManag/Toyota%20way%2014%20principales.pdf>

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Off the page...

Lead As If You Have No Authority by Dave Munch

This is a common problem we run across with Kaizen teams.

The improvement team is working diligently on a process; understanding and analyzing current state, performing tests of change, developing counter measures and an implementation plan. They gave management and staff the opportunity to check in with the teams during the Kaizen event. Attendance at these stakeholder sessions is sparse, by both management and floor staff. When it comes time for implementation the Kaizen team is told a certain group needs to approve the new process before they can implement. The Kaizen team feels unsupported and possibly angry after all the hard work they put into this effort. Their understanding is that the future state that they developed would be implemented. This type of dilemma is not uncommon and there are very important issues illustrated in this example that deserve comment.

The 14 Lean Principles as described by Jeffrey Liker, in their entirety, will guide successful implementations. Focusing on a few of them and ignoring others welcomes the risk of failure. It is easy to lose site of this, to pay attention to the more technical aspects of this approach ignoring the adaptive and behavioral principles. The thirteenth of these principles describes the importance of achieving consensus, Make Decisions slowly by consensus, thoroughly considering all options; implement rapidly. This is achieved through dialogue in a process of “catch-ball”. The more people that understand and agree with the future state, the more likely implementation will be successful. This is what the stakeholder sessions on days two and three of the Kaizen events are designed for.

So, in the scenario above, if the Kaizen team exercises “authority” and imposes the implementation, it is likely to fail over time because consensus was not achieved. On the other hand, if the decisions of a diligent Kaizen team must go through layers of approval by groups or councils that did not observe the current state, they will likely suffer the fate of “Death by Committee”. Failure is likely either way.

Kaizen events, or rapid improvement events are just that, rapid. It is critical for the management and staff to take advantage of the time given during the stakeholder sessions to have the necessary dialogue and gain consensus such that the improvements are not bogged down in layers of committees and approvals. The Kaizen team must have support by the rest of the organization and it is leadership’s responsibility to see to it that the support is given. It is management’s responsibility to give the support. That means presence at key times during the Kaizen process to understand the activity and recommendations. It means showing up with active listening and inquiry, being open to the changes that have been developed. It means dialogue around the areas of valid concern and disagreement until consensus is achieved such that the Kaizen teams’ recommendations can be implemented right away.

It means supporting the Kaizen team by addressing organizational barriers that are all too common in hospital environments. It means understanding the standard work that has been developed and actively coaching this change to the front line staff.

Successful implementations must be owned by operations. Absolving themselves of this responsibility and delegating this to the Kaizen team or the “quality department” without the above support will prove to be fatal to the events success.

Consensus in the above context does not necessarily mean a majority. It means critical mass. Critical mass is that number that is sufficient to drive success. W. Edward Deming stated that the number of people to achieve critical mass with most changes is the square root of N, N being the number of people who must change. For a group of 9, the critical mass is 3. For a group of 100, the critical mass is 10 and so on. These aren't just people who approve of the change; they are the ones who lead the change. These are the people who have passion for the change and are willing to have the interactions with the rest of the team to drive the success.

Taichi Ono's advised developing leaders in his organization to “Lead is if you have no authority.” That requires dialogue, listening, inquiry and consensus building. It is far more effective than command and control. It takes more work in the beginning, but far less work in the end. The 13th principle.

This article was written by Dr. David Munch, Chief consulting and clinical officer at HPP. He comes from Exemplar Lutheran Medical Center as their Chief Clinical and Quality Officer. At Exemplar, Dr Munch led their Lean Production applications resulting in substantial improvements in both clinical and non-clinical processes.

Dr. Munch is an instructor for the Belmont University Lean Healthcare Certificate Course, and was previously an instructor at the University of Michigan's Lean Certification Program and has been a frequent speaker on the subject of leadership effectiveness and Lean transformation for a number of healthcare organizations including Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), The University of Rochester Medical Center, Yale-New Haven Health System, Tulane University Medical Center, Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative, Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement (ICSI), and the Voluntary Hospital Association (VHA).

Dr. Munch has served on the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's High Reliability Advisory Group, has an extensive background in hospital operations, health plan governance, physician organization governance and clinical practice in Internal Medicine.