

BREAKTHROUGH

Lean Implementation & Training Resource Publication
Brought to you by Lean Manufacturing Solutions Partnership, Inc.

THE EIGHTH WASTE

By Michael Lewis

WASTE AMIDST IMPROVEMENT

In an organization operating or implementing a Continuous Improvement Program, it is imperative that a method be put into place for ensuring the continuation of the improvements. Often the methods that were used to start the Lean process are used again, later, in an effort to recreate the initial levels of success – hire another Lean guy, hold another workshop, hire another consultant, or publish the corporate goals – again. Although all these may work to get, or increase, Continuous Improvement activities, often there is a decline in improvements as the low-hanging fruit is eventually all picked. Once the easy wins are realized, some organizations struggle to maintain the continuous improvement momentum. In some drastic cases, companies will revert to their previous ways.

The Eighth waste is described several ways: Unused creativity, wasted human potential, underutilized talents. Elimination of the Eighth waste can provide us the Continuous element in our “Continuous Improvement Program”. The fact is that a company has more employees than Lean implementers, initially. The organization that captures the essence of Lean, transforms their entire workforce into Lean implementers.

When we look to the benchmark, Toyota, and how to tap into the employee creativity well, we find that standardized training is the catalyst for involving all employees. Toyota team members are developed internally with the same core training. They are promoted or transferred to areas of increasing responsibility based on their successful application of their core training. Persons hired from outside the company normally fill positions at the lowest levels of the organization, where the basic training begins. The commitment to standardized training of all employees is one of the “Secrets” to the Toyota Production System (TPS). Training allows replication of TPS in each new facility, and assures continuation of TPS principles in all new hires at an existing plant. Standardized training teaches each new employee how to contribute to the improvement of their process within the structure of TPS and taps into each individual’s creativity.

A company wanting to begin involving their employees in Lean initiatives needs to have a starting point. Each company’s situation is different, so let’s assume a worst case scenario for a starting point to begin training:

1. There is no one to train employees.
2. There is no budget to hire a trainer.
3. There is no training material.
4. There is no time available for employees to train.
5. The employees have had no prior Lean training or exposure.

TAPPING IN

Where do we start? Each of our scenario items needs to be resolved, so let’s answer the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How.

Page 1/2

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TAPPING IN, Cont'd

1. **WHO WILL BE THE TRAINER?** The best facilitator on your leadership team should be the lead trainer. **WHY?** The training material will be straight forward. A person with speaking and meeting facilitation skills will be needed to present the material clearly and guide the learning.
2. **WHO WILL BE TRAINED?** Everyone in the company will eventually be trained. Pick lead people from cross functional groups for the first class. **WHY?** We will utilize a "Train the Trainer" teaching method. A faster plant-wide implementation can occur, and the initial core group of trainers can become the mentors/coaches as more people are trained.
3. **WHAT WILL BE TRAINED?** Basic Problem Solving should be the core class around which all other Lean classes are built. **WHY?** Solving problems is the heart of Continuous Improvement. Permanent correction of problems and the employee learning that occurs while fixing problems in their area will create the momentum needed to sustain a Continuous Improvement program, and tap into employee creativity.
4. **WHERE WILL THE TRAINING OCCUR?** In an area near the process that does not interfere with the process. **WHY?** Problems are more easily solved at the point of cause. Maintaining a narrow focus will facilitate initial learning and reduce the time to solve a problem.
5. **WHEN WILL THE TRAINING OCCUR?** Initial training can be broken down into five or ten minute segments and implementation of the daily training can begin on the same day it is taught. **WHY?** Learning by doing is the most effective training method. Basic Problem Solving is not difficult to learn, and the material lends itself to short teachings, followed by practical application.
6. **HOW WILL THE TRAINING OCCUR?** The material selected for training should be standardized for all salaried and hourly employees. The training material can be purchased, the first trainer can attend an off-site problem solving class, or a trainer can be hired to teach the first class. **WHY?** Standardized material will facilitate cross functional problem solving in the future, as problem solving skills improve and groups begin to work on problems that originate outside their work area. Standardized material will also provide a check method if a person or group begins to stray from the standard problem solving method. When a student completes a Problem Solving class, he will have been through an entire problem solving cycle, including solving an actual problem. When a student has been through the class once, he only needs to practice solving more problems to increase his skill. As a trainer teaches each class, he will also be solving a problem with the class. Therefore it is practical to use a simplified method initially, and as problems are solved, problem solving skills will increase.

STAY ON TARGET

Now we've started. Employees are trained; more are being trained. What next? Solve problems. Set a goal for each person, each group, and each department that has been trained to solve a specific number of problems per set time period. Management follow-up should be in the form of encouragement, providing resources, and challenging the problem solvers to go at it again. The GOAL is to involve all employees in the company transformation. The TARGET is participation in problem solving.

Page 2/2

Stay tuned!

The final article of this 4 part series on Implementation Principles comes next month. That article will address an overlooked Lean tool: "System Pressure."

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