



Lean Concepts Inc.
Find a Better Way

Lean News from Lean Concepts, Inc.

Vol. 4, Issue 4-Sept, 2011

In This Issue: New Lean Partner— The Reading Group | Update on Lean Certificate Classes | Lean Leadership Series

LCI Welcomes The Reading Group

Lean Concepts, Inc is pleased to announce that we have begun working with The Reading Group in Reading Pennsylvania, assisting them with their Lean journey. The Reading Group has been manufacturing truck bodies since 1955 and their wide variety of bodies are sold internationally through a network of distributors.

They are leaders in providing a wide variety of truck bodies to more industries than any other body manufacturer. Their Award Winning Aluminum truck bodies are saving fuel, increasing payloads, and are backed by the best warranty. From their 335,000 square foot manufacturing facility, Reading sets the benchmark by which all other truck bodies are measured.

Lean Concepts, Inc was called in to help further the improvements they started on their own and assist in the implementation of world class best practices. Visit The Reading Group on the web at www.readingbody.com or Call them at 800-458-2226.



EXPECT MORE. CHOOSE READING.

LEAN CERTIFICATION COURSE!!

4.2 CEU's

Part I Tuesday, March 27, 2012 thru Thursday, March 29, 2012

8:30am-4:30pm

Part II Tuesday, April 1, 2012 thru Thursday, April 3, 2012

8:30am-4:30pm

[University of Akron-Medina County University Center](#)

6300 Technology Lane

Medina, OH 44256

330-721-2210

Here is what Connie King from the Medina County University Center had to say about the recently completed Lean Class at her facility—"MCUC was extremely pleased with the method in which Lean Concepts presented our Lean Mastery class. John Veatch was constantly engaged with the audience, and even though the classroom was both manufacturing and service industry based, he was able to motivate all students to embrace the concepts of Lean, use examples that applied across both sectors and ask questions that provoked students to approach their issues from new perspectives. Everyone at Lean Concepts is professional and a pure joy to work with. We hope to continue using the instruction expertise of Lean Concepts both in our open enrollment and contract training Lean classes."

LEAN CERTIFICATION COURSE

Part I Monday, Feb 6, 2012 thru Wednesday, Feb 8, 2012

8:30am-4:30pm

Part II Monday, March 5, 2012 thru Wednesday, March 7, 2012

8:30am-4:30pm

Vincennes University-Jasper Campus

850 College Avenue

Jasper, IN 47546

More details on registration available later.

LEAN LEADERSHIP SERIES

In this section we bring you sound advice from two recognized leaders in the Lean industry. The first one addresses the principles of Lean Six Sigma and the importance of executive leadership in the improvement process which is an especially important principle that we see overlooked at times but is absolutely critical to the success of any Lean Journey. The article is part of a presentation by Robert Blaha, President of Human Capital Associates, as reported by Jill Jusko of Industry Week Magazine.

Are you contemplating a Lean Six Sigma deployment in your organization to drive operational excellence?

Remember the principles.

Have you already introduced a Lean Six Sigma effort, but it is struggling? Don't let the bump bring you to a halt. Instead, go back to the principles. "When everyone gets lost, go back to the principles. When you don't know where you are, go back to the principles," says Robert Blaha, president of consulting firm Human Capital Associates.

What are the Principles?

The first basic truth is that value is in the eyes of the customer, Blaha emphasized during a recent presentation. "What is the customer actually paying us for?" he says.

The next principle is a value-stream focus, specifically eliminating waste and variation in those value streams.

The remaining principles are making products flow, creating customer pull and pursuing perfection through continuous cycles of learning.

Some of these principles aren't new and have been around since at least the early 1990s, notes Blaha. What differentiates Lean Six Sigma from improvement programs of the past, however, is this:

- The focus on the customer is ever more important, and it is a data-driven process. A benefit of a data-driven process is that it removes some of the politics from the equation, notes the Human Capital Associates president. "You make arguments with data versus the loudest voice in the room," he says.
- It emphasizes the engagement of everyone in the organization, from the production workers to the leadership, in the pursuit of perfection. Lean Six Sigma is about the culture of an organization, not simply about tools, he said.
- It leverages both the continuous improvement power of lean and Six Sigma.

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The Importance of Leadership

Executive buy-in is essential to success, Blaha says. He doesn't equivocate on this point. In fact, he says don't deploy Lean Six Sigma without leadership involvement. That's not to say leadership buy-in is a given. It may take some persuasion. That said, Blaha points out that at some point everyone/anyone has to be convinced to participate.

He says relentless education may help convince leaders to support a Lean Six Sigma effort, and there are plenty of white papers and other published materials available. Other options include finding a mentor or a sponsor who already has deployed the process to share the experience with the leadership. If you are trying to convince a vice president, find a vice president, he suggests.

As a third suggestion, Blaha says to find the "biggest doubting Thomas" and ask him or her what it would take to get buy-in. Then build an action plan around the response, Blaha says. He notes that if you turn that doubter, you'll likely turn others. The executive role in Lean Six Sigma is essential to the effort's success, yet it is frequently the biggest disconnect. **The executive must truly understand the process. The executive "must own the vision and drive it"** Blaha says.

Gemba Walk

The second article this month deals with another very important part of leading in a lean environment, the GEMBA WALK. This principle is about getting out to wherever the work is done and observing. Thanks for this article go to Jamie Flinchbaugh, founder and partner of the Lean Learning Center in Novi, MI, and the co-author of "The Hitchhiker's Guide to Lean: Lessons from the Road."

The term "gemba" has gone in the lean community from obscure to ubiquitous, as popular as terms like kaizen. But through the growth in its use, there has also been a growth in its misuse. How do we make this work?

Gemba means "the real place" and is intended to get you to the location where something is really going on, whether a news story or a sporting event or a factory floor. It's use has grown to include a more comprehensive approach. First, it requires a deep curiosity to know what is really going on. Not what you assume is going on, or what you heard is going on, but what is really going on.

Second, it implies a skill of direct observation of how work is performed. The goal of gemba behaviors is to understand the current reality of a situation more clearly. We prefer these words, direct observation, because it states what you are doing. But the words are less important than the behavior.

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Third, it demonstrates a principle of respect for people. This is because you go to where work is performed and engage people directly, not assuming you know the answer from a distance. One of my favorite quotes is from Dwight Eisenhower: "Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you're 1,000 miles from the corn field." Here are four steps that may make going to the gemba more successful.

1. Identify your purpose. Too often, people go out to observe without a purpose. Even Wikipedia compares the concept of gemba to the 1990s concept of Management By Walking Around (MBWA). But this doesn't mean to just go for a stroll. Without a purpose, MBWA is really Management By Wandering Aimlessly.

Why are you going to observe? What are you trying to learn by going to the gemba? If you can't answer these questions, then don't start.

2. Know your gemba. I see people refer to the gemba as the factory floor, as if they were synonymous. This is true if the problem relates to the factory floor. And there is no question that people should be spending more time there understanding what is going on. But this isn't the only gemba.

There are problems that require observation in the board room, or at the customer, or on the shipping docks, or in the control room. The point is, the gemba is wherever the activity is performed that you are trying to learn and understand. Find the point of activity; this is your gemba.

3. Observe with a framework. There is a difference between looking around, and observing. The primary difference comes from the framework through which you observe. Do you just see what is on the surface? Do you see equipment, people, and material?

Or do you have a framework that helps you digest, analyze and communicate what you are observing? We use a lens and a language of looking at work performed as activities, connections and flows. Whether in the board room or on the shop floor, all work is made up of these components.

4. Validate what you see. The easiest thing to do is to assume that what we see is a true representation of reality. However, there are often many things that cannot be seen on the surface. These may include decisions made during the process in people's heads, abnormalities that were recognized because we did not know the norm or variations from one person to the next that we did not observe.

Once you have captured your observations, it is best to test and validate your conclusions with those doing the work. This is not the only input, but it is one way to understand if you have a good handle on the current reality. Going to the gemba has become popular for the simple reason that it is powerfully effective. But there is more to it than getting up from your desk, as even this simple explanation attempts to demonstrate.

Lean Concepts, Inc Suggested Reading List

Below is a list of some great books that Lean Concepts, Inc highly recommends. The first one, [GEMBA WALKS](#), is currently being read by Lean Concepts, Inc staff and is written by Jim Womack, author of The Machine That Changed the world and the Founder and Senior Advisor of The Lean Enterprise Institute.

Gemba Walks—James P. Womack

The Toyota Way – Jeffery K. Liker and David Meier

The Machine That Changed the World - James P. Womack

Lean Thinking – James P. Womack and Daniel Jones.

The Visual Factory – Michel Greif.

Process Problem Solving – Bob Sproull.

Out of the Crisis – W. Edward Deming.

Business Think – Dave Marcum, Steve Smith, and Mahan Khalsa.

Who Moved MY Cheese? – Spencer Johnson,MD

The OZ Principle – Connors, Smith, Hickman

The Kaizen Sketchbook – Marypat Cooper

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