



LEAN MANAGEMENT JOURNAL

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ARE WE BETTER OFF ALONE?

The ideologies and 'isms' competing with lean; better with or against them?

Organisations and interviews featured in this edition include: National Instruments, Umicore Autocat, Tier Link Limited, Metcam, Valeocon Management Consulting, Lincoln Financial Group, Tecla Consulting and University of Buckingham.

IN THIS ISSUE:

From lean to operational excellence: studies in success: How lean has transformed over the years and spawned its shoot-offs. Are they greater than their predecessor or do they lend themselves to the improvement of all?

12 common mistakes that minimise project impact and how to protect against them: Those niggling errors all businesses make that can seriously harm the bottom line and lead a successful lean implementation to fail.

Applying LSS to save the planet: Can lean save humanity from the disaster of its own making?





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Dear reader,

Welcome to our summer issue of the *Lean Management Journal*. This month's we've taken a look at how lean co-operates with other methodologies, ideologies and - those things my history lecturers lovingly referred to as - 'isms'. But we're not discussing 18th century political discourse, but how lean can interact with everything from other business efficiency methodologies such as operational excellence, to sustainability and green issues; a subject we covered briefly last year, but needs to be discussed in more depth.

Aside from lean being used to save the planet we have an exciting array of other articles for you in this issue. *Andrew Hemmings* re-joins us for part two of his take on the lean supply chain.

Thomas Bertels and *Rizwan Khan* comes to LMJ with a 12 point plan to fixing business processes while *Balasaheb Albhar*, comes in from India to see how lean and sustainability can interact. Should lean be fighting its corner in this area more vociferously? If the world needs to use less resources and care for itself more then surely waste reduction should be at the forefront of the fight against climate change?

In other articles, we are joined by *Bruce Hagenau* from Georgia, USA, who teaches us about how kaizen techniques helped steel fabricators Metcam to improve their bottom line and progress with new goals.

As well this month we have our next instalment of the lean diary with *Joseph Ricciardelli* from Tecla Consulting. Joseph goes after how to balance your chakras, engage with a healthy aura and generally look after yourself. You need to be healthy, invigorated, with a positive outlook to take on a cultural change in your organisation and here you can learn how to undertake those things without jeopardising your performance to do so.

This month we also have a review of National Instruments' facility in Hungary, which I had the pleasure of touring.

The factory is a benchmark in lean ingenuity and in this review we look at where they manage to get lean so right.

We hope you enjoy this issue released just in time for our annual conference in Amsterdam in early July. The conference is a fantastic way of networking and learning best practice through communication and resource sharing. The industries and sectors presenting attending this year is larger than ever before and we hope you'll be in attendance to continue to learn and contribute to the discussions. It's all about spreading the word on lean, spreading the knowledge and spreading ideas. Have a great summer (or a cosy winter for our southern hemisphere readers) and we hope to see you there.

Andrew Putwain, Commissioning Editor.

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More information on our editorial board, their experience, and views on lean is available on the *LMJ* website: www.leanmj.com



As young children, we had an instinctive need to be close to our parents – feeling anxiety or even a sense of abandonment if they were not within our sight. As we grew older – and whether it was geographically, intellectually, or psychologically – we would become comfortable with greater distances from what we felt were our basic truths, but almost always as stepping stones and rarely great leaps.

Think of early commanders of sailing ships always keeping sight of land until travelling ever greater distances was more predictable because of maps, navigation techniques and tools.

From the time humans learned to sharpen stones, before gaining the wisdom to attach them to sticks to improve their hunting effectiveness, to harnessing the wind and eventually the atom to leverage the energies contained therein, we have always been seeking ways of improving our lives. The one common discipline running through all these stepping-stones of advancement is the notion of continuous improvement – the increase of velocity and predictability with less human effort.

As it is with the notion of lean which, it can be argued, started with Henry Ford and the assembly line and was leveraged on a mass industrial scale during World War II.

But after World War II, there was a divergence in the way companies were run in the West as compared to the East which was largely based on the cultural differences in the structure of the social fabric. In the West, the relationship between employer and employee was largely one of command and control – about the self. Whereas in the East, this relationship was inclined to be more collaborative and about the community. This difference meant the ideas of how a modern business might operate – in an increasingly global marketplace – progressed faster in the East than in the West.

Just as the central planning of communist nations proved inferior to the distributed planning of nations that practiced capitalism; the practice of command and control in business proved inferior to those who were collaborative.

So it is with the stepping-stones of the journey that is lean. The real question, and challenge, is whether lean is an inclusive discipline or an exclusive discipline?

For instance, do those that embrace six sigma as a means to continuous improvement run *contraire* to the aspirations of lean? How about those who are disciples of the theory of constraints? Are PDCA, DMAIC, and OODA incompatible with one another? How about you, personally? Do you ever find yourself arguing the merits of one approach or set of tools versus the other? Is it because you are correct or is it because you like to stay close to your parents as you did when you were a child – because it's comfortable? What if nobody was right or wrong – yet everyone was right and wrong?

We talk about creating a pull in the operations of our business. What if we tried to create a pull when it came to opportunities for improvement – with the nature of the opportunity creating the pull on the various tools, approaches, and “isms” necessary to realise the opportunity without prejudice?

After all, if lean is about improvement, then as it exists today must change for tomorrow as we move forward onto the next stepping-stone.

Love Joseph's columns? Hear him speak at the LMJAC, July 8-9 in Amsterdam. Go to lmjannualconference.com for more details!