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LEAN THOUGHTS

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What to teach the Kids The latest newsletter from Dan Jones

Dear Richard

As we take a summer break I was wondering how we should help the next generation to compete in the increasingly global economy. Experts looking at the rise of China and India conclude that we need to teach our children more maths and science, because that is what they are doing. This may be part of the answer.

But lean has also taught us that all of us live and work in many quite complicated interdependent processes (value streams). We are spending more of our own time managing the consumption processes to run our households. We are also spending more of our work time trying to straighten out value streams that cross departments and other organisations across the globe.

As a result of this we discover that working together (with colleagues and suppliers) to improve these end-to-end processes can actually have a much greater impact on competitiveness (and living standards) than point improvements in the way work is done or in technology. So the first thing we need to teach them is how to see the world in terms of processes rather than discrete activities.

Lean process thinking requires a different consciousness of the purpose of each value stream and how it actually works in practice. But it also needs a common way of thinking and working together with others up and down these value streams to manage and improve them. Therefore possibly the most important thing we can help the next generation to learn is not just science and technology, but how to use the scientific method itself to improve all the processes in their lives.

The experimental, scientific method is of course fundamental to solving scientific and technical problems. Shewhart, Deming and others in the quality movement showed the power of the Plan, Do, Check, Act problem solving cycle in understanding and removing the causes of variance in all kinds of situations. But it was Toyota who took this one step further and built their whole management system around the use of the scientific method to plan every action, to solve every problem and to develop every employee.

Common use of the scientific method is the glue that makes a process focused organisation work. It also turns out that a process focused environment is the most likely to ensure continued and widespread use of the scientific method. They actually go hand in hand. One without the other does not work for very long.

Knowledge of the scientific method is best developed through the repeated experience of solving ever more challenging problems and planning ever more ambitious process improvements. But it needs to be guided by a sensei or teacher who challenges the pupil to develop their thinking by asking the right questions, rather than simply telling them the answers.

The place to begin this journey is to give each pupil a problem to solve that is within their scope to address (not how to solve the greenhouse effect!), and to show them a common way of summarising the steps in solving the problem on one A3 sheet of paper. Then ask the pupil to go away and come back with an accurate description of the problem and the situation. The teacher's job is to get the pupil to really understand the problem and to think about how they would know when it had been truly solved, avoiding the natural instinct to jump to solutions that may or may not be relevant.

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Where "Lean Thoughts" Become Reality

Then through a series of iterations the teacher helps the pupil to systematically brainstorm several alternative ways of solving the problem and once these are agreed to develop a plan to try these out, if possible one at a time, measuring the results as they proceed. Once they have the evidence of which actions do solve the problem and which do not, then they need to reflect on the lessons learnt, how these could be incorporated into common procedures and who else might benefit from these findings.

Change the words pupil and teacher for manager and their subordinates and you can see what should be happening at every level in your organisation too. But is it? We all know PDCA, but is it only actually used by your quality people? Is it part of a common A3 language for problem solving and planning? Is it the key language for the development of your people?

Do your managers really understand enough about their processes by going there frequently (rather than waiting for someone to bring them the numbers) so they can ask the right questions to guide their subordinates? Do they have time for this or are they more interested in (repeated) quick fixes to fight today's fires or make this month's numbers? Are your problems visible or hidden?

I am convinced that we will hear more about the use of Toyota style A3 planning and problem solving in the months ahead. Indeed I doubt that any firm can really make and sustain their lean journeys without making this a fundamental part of the way their management works.

Developing the abilities of our employees and citizens to use the scientific method to plan effective action and to solve problems together with others is probably the best investment we could make to improve the competitiveness of our organisations and the living standards of the population.

Have a good summer break.
Best wishes

Daniel T Jones
Chairman, Lean Enterprise Academy



"This is the most absurd, unbelievable, pointless idea I've ever heard. I like it!"

Waste Identification

We all know that the primary use of Lean tools is to identify and eliminate waste. By doing this we begin to see one piece or continuous flow within our processes and operations.

While monitoring one of my favorite Lean Blogs last week, someone posted a pretty nifty way to remember the eight primary wastes ... which ultimately do create "DOWNTIME"

The 8 wastes are,

- D- Defects
- O- Overproduction
- W- Waiting
- N- Not utilizing people's creativity
- T- Transport
- I- Inventory
- M- Motion
- E- Excessive processing

OOPS ! I didn't mean it that way ...

Have you ever spoken and wished that you could immediately take the words back or that you could crawl into a hole?

I was at the golf store comparing different kinds of golf balls. I was unhappy with the women's type I had been using. After browsing for several minutes, I was approached by one of the good-looking gentlemen who works at the store. He asked if he could help me. Without thinking, I looked at him and said, 'I think I like playing with men's balls.'

My sister and I were at the mall and passed by a store that sold a variety of candy and nuts. As we were looking at the display case, the boy behind the counter asked if we needed any help. I replied, 'No, I'm just looking at your nuts.' My sister started to laugh hysterically, the boy grinned, and I turned beet-red and walked away. To this day, my sister has never let me forget.

While on a flight from New York, the stewardess was busy passing out peanuts and cokes to everyone. There were about sixteen flights lined up waiting to get clearance to take off. Then the other stewardess got a message from the pilot that the tower said the wind had changed 180 degrees and they were first in line to take off, and to have everyone buckle up. Without thinking she just announced 'Please buckle up, grab your drinks and hold your nuts, we're taking off!'. No one saw her for the rest of the flight to Houston, and all the other stewardesses were laughing all the way and so were half of the passengers.

Thanks to Brad Labrum for making me laugh.

Consortium Event Schedule



Tour Workshop Conference

January	February	March	April	May	June
<p>T</p> <p>Wednesday 24 <u>Eaton Electrical</u>, contact Joe Fisher, JoeRFisher@eaton.com</p> <p>W</p> <p>La-Z-Boy Corporate Monroe MI February 14 & 15 <u>Enterprise Value Stream Mapping</u> How to use the VSM tools to map admin processes. Contact Richard Kunst for info. Richard.kunst@la-z-boy.com Register at www.ame.org</p>	<p>T</p> <p>Wednesday 14, <u>CFN Precision</u>, contact Paul Kaulback, pkaulback@cfn-inc.com</p>	<p>T</p> <p>Wednesday 21, <u>Nestle Waters</u>, contact Mariela Castano mcastano@perriergroup.com</p>	<p>T</p> <p>Wednesday 18, <u>CTS Corp.</u>, contact Bob Garces, Bob.Garces@ac.ctscorp.com</p> <p>C</p> <p>Lean Design & Development Conference Wed 18 to Fri 20 Chicago Contact www.iirusa.com/lean</p>	<p>T</p> <p>Wednesday 16, <u>Stackpole CSD</u>, contact Don Barber Don.Barber@stackpole.ca</p> <p>Consortium Shareshowcase</p> <p>Saturday 05 <u>CGL Guelph</u>, Contact Cindy Grolleman Grolleman@canada.com or Dave Deskur daved@cglmfg.com</p>	<p>T</p> <p>Wednesday 20, <u>Morrison LaMothe</u>, contact Tony Vita tvita@morrisonlamthe.com</p> <p>C</p> <p>AME Regional Conference Mon 18 to Thur 21 Edmonton, Alberta Contact www.measureupforsuccess.com</p>
July	August	September	October	November	December
		<p>T</p> <p>Wednesday 26, <u>Kraft Foods</u>, contact Hanif Jivraj hjivraj@Kraft.com</p>	<p>T</p> <p>Wednesday 10, <u>CGL Manufacturing</u> contact Dave Deskur daved@cglmfg.com</p> <p>C</p> <p>AME National Conference Mon 29 to Friday Nov 2 Chicago Contact www.ame.org</p>	<p>T</p> <p>Wednesday 14, <u>Messier-Dowty</u>, contact Mike Smith Mike.Smith@Messier-dowty.on.ca</p>	<p>T</p> <p>Wednesday 12, <u>Orenda</u>, contact Brenda McIntosh brendamcintosh@orenda.com</p>