

Paradigm  
shift:creating a  
continuous  
improvement culture  
essay



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Paradigm Shift: Creating a Continuous Improvement Culture David Smothers Management Dry. Ingram January 5, 2011 Successful Lean Six Sigma (LESS) deployments rely on the ability of a deployment to effectively apply Six Sigma DYNAMIC methodologies with the ability to concurrently apply Lean tools in order to drive Continuous Improvement into the culture of the business. Designing a Lean Six Sigma deployment to be an integrated model ties together the Six Sigma well structured approach with the Lean approach of matching quantity and quality to satisfy customers.

Various companies have begun implementing a top down deployment that was primarily focused on driving continuous improvement through the DYNAMIC approach. Companies that want to achieve a new level of improvement have actively moved to a Lean Six Sigma model that relies upon well trained operators and managers who are leaders in their own business unit to drive improvement from the bottom up. There have been other companies that have followed this type of LESS continuous improvement (C') model as it drives a culture of CLC rather than piling on initiatives from the top down.

This approach also overcomes common stumbling blocks that exist in many CLC plenteous. It also drives empowerment and Job satisfaction in many organizations. Aligning grass roots efforts from line personnel to high level business goals also creates cohesion from the line level to the overall goals and vision of the company. Alignment also meaner that a healthy culture of innovation and continuous improvement will be developed at all levels of the organization. Integrating Six Sigma and Lean Six Sigma and Lean are very complementary when integrated well.

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Lean eliminates waste and variation in business process and Six Sigma DYNAMIC focuses on delivering customer satisfaction through a focus on quality, delivery, and cost. (Salad, et al, 2010, p. 251) In an integrated fashion, Lean Six Sigma can use a variety of methodologies to achieve better financial results and improved processes. An LSS deployment still utilizes the structures of employing specially trained individuals; master black belts, black belts, and green belts. (Montgomery, 2010, 62) The various tools relating to both methodologies can be used to gain the maximum benefit with the appropriate effort. (Meredith, et al. , 2010, 171-206) Below is the Solutions Matrix that I came up with to channel efforts in my own organization. It relates to whether or not a solution is known and whether or not the root cause has been identified. Effective implementation of Lean Six Sigma is a three stage process (page 253): 1 . Goals for the deployment need to be initiated 2. Projects needs to be identified and assigned to the leaders in the business through a leverage format.

The leverage technique gives new LSS belts the chance to grow the LSS skill set under the direction of black belts and master black belts 3.

Implementing the culture shift through training, coaching, and empowerment by shifting from leverage to empowerment. Shifting from Top Down to Bottom Up SIX Sigma projects can De uses to Nonentity Torture leaders In an organization. (Sense, 2010, 10) There is also an expectation that change will happen and processes will naturally migrate from their original design. Traditional or formal management structures have been very top down oriented.

They tend to be rigid, dictatorial, and task-oriented with a one-way style of communication. (Dunning, et al. , 2006, 260) Many organizations have deployed Lean management but have done it within traditional management or top down initiatives rather than empowerment of their field talent. Even the Marine Corps has employed Lean into its organization but projects are driven down from the top. In Simplemindedly, a Tycoon International Company, we have shifted the Operational Excellence focus from a top down approach too line management approach.

Basically, there has been a diligent shift from a dictatorial approach to one that empowers the future leaders of the company with a sense of freedom to use Lean tools to improve their business units. Volvo, Motorola, Ericson, and Siemens have come to understand how dispersing authority of decision making out to the field organization drives Job satisfaction. Chon, 2010, 99-118) Job satisfaction drives productivity and process improvement. Process improvement cuts out waste. Cutting out waste improves the bottom line.

There is still a clear disconnect with the goals and styles of the operations executive team in many organizations today. LESS deployments are bound to struggle without support from all levels of management. A deployment champion has a duty to make sure that projects align with high level goals in order to gain support from management. (Kelly, 2007, 16-17) Driving Empowerment Dedicate and empower the right people on the right projects. Salad, et al. , 2010, 254) Business leaders need to take the holistic approach to improving the business in order to achieve long term gain. Broglie, 2010, 94) The holistic approach as opposed to the driven down approach to LESS

implementation assumes that an organization has the right people in the  
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organization that can drive the organization to greatness. The driven down approach is very management heavy and decision are not made at the line level. Rather, decisions are dictated to the line level and authority is centralized. A departure from traditional styles of centralized decision making can be liberating for workers and organizations. Liberation can lead to positive and comprehensive change for the better. Uzis, et al. , 2010, 173-184) Completing the Culture Shift A culture shift can only happen when there are the following conditions: 1 . Visible commitment from executive management 2. Clear understanding of the voice of the customer 3. Clear understanding of the true facts of business performance 4. Recognition for line leaders when they drive permanent change management 5. Open communication of lessons learned in relation to either success or failures 6. Getting the right people on the right projects 7.

Clear commitment at all levels to continuous improvement Sustained cultural improvement in an organization relies upon many factors but the ones listed above are critical to driving a business culture to sustained operational excellence through a commitment to continuous improvement. Ornament, et al. , 2010, 191-201) Empowering all levels of authority with decision making power to effect change upon an organization Walton ten structured parameters AT continuous improvement was Deeming intention. The intention was to create an environment that has a cultural commitment to quality and excellence.

The goal was quality from end-to-end. (Montgomery, 2010, 64) All facets of a company's culture can be committed to continuous improvement if everyone is focused on the same goal but empowered to make decisions at the line  
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level if needed. It's the example of all of the sailors rowing the boat in the same direction. An organization must align project implementation with the vision and goals of the company and empower field staff to contribute to the goals of the organization. Executive management can begin by aligning the tools to focus on the Sino.

Even a simple tool like a business scorecard can move the focus to operational excellence. (Broglie, 2008, 39-40) LESS is not just about "problem solving", it's about cultural revolution of organizations towards being more competitive by being customer-centric while cutting out waste. (Broaching, 2008, 38-39) Ultimately, the evolution through the revolution through the upheaval of old forms of management will lead to empowerment of creative and talented leaders. Commitment starts at the senior level but empowerment starts at the line level.

(Sense, 2010, 9-27) When senior management turns the reigns over to well-trained lower level leaders to ensure that their teams are rowing the boat in the same direction, true cultural change can be initiated. Enabling the paradigm shift from traditional styles of management to a more empowered workforce can release creative energy at all levels. That creative energy can then be channeled towards improving the business visa-à-vis a workforce that is proud of the company which they created by first creating a culture of continuous improvement.