

Lean Thinking is dead or seriously ill ?

Or simply quite often one's "throw out the baby with the bath water" meaning that an impropere execution of lean methods and lean procedures brings many improvement projects to failure.

Lets read toghether your 60 and more answers to the fatal question..



Reasons of projects failure

William Buck, PE wrote:

Projects fail for a variety of reasons. Most often they fail because they were bad ideas or mismanaged in execution.

I wouldn't put lean thinking itself as the root cause.



Use, misuse and abuse of Lean

Nilakanta Srinivasan (Neil) wrote:

Lean is a philosophy. Its like a religion. You believe in it and it works.. dont believe and its of no use.

Lean philosophy like religion, there will use, misuse and abuse which will bear its on fruits. It doesnt mean that the doctrine is incorrect.

Practitioners largely at fault and not the philosophy!



Lean, change and business results

Guy Dixon wrote:

Quite the reverse. I believe lean thinking is emerging as the best way to effect properly targeted and quantifiable change that brings business results that lead to improved quality, delivery, safety, cost reduction, and empower people. Where there are problems I would argue that the message has got confused, or misinterpreted, or that there are errors in execution. I would argue that lean thinking is the overarching methodology that is being subscribed to, and that theory of constraints (bottlenecks) and six sigma are increasingly seen as toolsets to be used as appropriate, under the overall lean methodology.



Lean cannot die

Raveen S. Nathan wrote:

Lean thinking now permeates every aspect of the North American business world. Agri- business, banking, bio technology, pharmaceuticals, government services to name a few. It cannot die.

How to you kill efficiency and effectiveness from any process ?



Become a lean company is a cultural change <

David Stouffer wrote:

If a project fails, it is usually due lack of follow through after a lean event. If a company uses lean just as a tool, then it will probably will fail. To become a lean company, is a cultural change for the company. Companies that are able to change their culture to lean thinking are not failing. To make sure a project doesn't fail requires constant monitoring and adjusting the employees to the "new way of thinking" until it becomes a behavior for them.



Simplicity of Lean Thinking

Greg Cramer wrote:

Well I certainly hope that Lean Thinking is not dead.

I have a small printed poster above my desk that says "Lean principals- 1. Create Value - 2. Eliminate Waste"

That always centers my thoughts about the improvement plan I may be attempting. I guess it is as ill as we want it to be by neglect of the the simplicity of Lean Thinking.



Control the project at all phasis

Delcour Camille wrote:

Lean thinking cannot be dead like above answers it is a philosophy. Maybe because today's activities ar getting more and more complex and are moving more and more quickly. Lean thinking should maybe today be associated to other methodologies like 6 sigma.

I believe that before putting the fault on lean thinking, it is necessary to control the project at all phasis, and to search the real reason for the failure.

We learn from our mistake and it is interesting and important to know what went wrong, in order to be better next time.



Understanding the real problems

Doug Lambert wrote:

Satchel Page was once asked how he threw so fast? He thought for a minute and said " first I learned to throw straight then I learned to throw fast."

Everything works to some extent. Look at Westinghouse and the famous lighting experiments. The trick is to know what to fix and why. Lean means less than nothing. Understanding the real problems and having authority to fix them is the only valid concept that works every time it is tried.



A framework for understanding how processes work

Ed Pound wrote:

I agree that the tools and techniques of Lean are very valuable. I think Lean has unfortunately, in many instances, descended to the level of folklore in practice. I had a client that worked at Toyota for a number of years tell me that he was told to "Go to Gemba" and stand there for 8 hours to understand how the operations worked. While I think there is value in observation, I wouldn't recommend that people learn how to build bridges by watching other people build bridges. Where Lean falls short is in providing a practical, scientific and comprehensive framework for understanding how processes work. Six Sigma on the other hand typically gets too detailed and tends to treat problems as black boxes. For example, "Let's do a Designed Experiment to determine the drivers of cycle time," but, in fact, the elements of cycle time are quantified and well known. At Factory Physics Inc., we believe that if design is done well, planning is easier, if planning is done well, execution becomes easier. Most Lean efforts that I have seen in the last 25 years are heavily focused on execution issues without proper consideration of design and planning requirements for processes. Future state value stream maps are typically wish lists and are fairly ineffective models for predicting future performance or cost implications.



Changes take effect over time

Glenn Floyd wrote:

I think that Lean has to be incorporated as part of the overall business system. This means not only using the lean tools for existing products but incorporating them into the new product launch along with Six Sigma controls.

If one is expecting to see monumental jumps in productivity or profitability because they begin to use the Lean tools I think that is unrealistic. The changes take effect over time and many organizations are too quick to go back to their old way of doing things at the first set back instead of analyzing what happened and using problem solving strategies to get to the root cause of the problem.



Beware of dogmatic approach to implementation

Jim Hart wrote:

Lean should be thought of as a philosophy; not a methodology. We always want to gain maximum efficiencies and eliminate waste. That can't be wrong, right? But, many of the implementation paradigms for "LEAN" as a methodology get caught up in the same bureaucracy which plagues development methodologies such as "AGILE" or "EXTREME". A dogmatic approach to implementation yields poor results because it creates waste on the opposite end of that which it is trying to rectify.

When we think about the typical American company, we typically find a bloated company where once was a lean, mean machine. Look at GM, Chrysler, Ford, GE for examples. What do all those people do? They couldn't possibly all be employed at 100%. Why do we need all of them?

The small company can be lean and move quickly because decisions are made close to the floor; with the "big picture" still in view. How can we get the people with the "big picture" back down "close to the floor"? If we can give them a view into operations which is timely and accurate again, they can begin making appropriate decisions. Most companies have lost the ability to manage this information in layers-upon-layers of middle management.

The companies need an effective "management operating system" in order to see and eliminate waste in real time.



Faulty expectations

Anthony Reardon wrote:

I think the problem is too many people don't "get it" or think they do. I have been learning and doing Lean for long enough to suggest:

Consider the intention going in and compare with outcomes. Even if the methodology or processes work, improper execution etc causes failures. Faulty expectations might be one reason why initiatives are deemed failures prematurely and thrown out. However, all those constitute as problems that deserve to be solved. "Lean" has become such a loaded term, I actually think it can get in the way.

There's too much confusion and subjective interpretation of concepts like "efficiency". Some say that's what it is all about. Others who have done Lean effectively can argue that is absolutely not what it is about. The point is, the challenges of simply thinking Lean do not necessarily support the intentions going in and the desired outcomes.



Combine approach with Six Sigma is successful

John Hattery wrote:

Challenging Lean outright I think is inappropriate. It is a valuable and useful methodology.

However, in my experience a combined Lean Six Sigma approach is most effective. Using a LSS framework, and making sure the organization has the right "key success factors" in place, will go a long way toward ensuring effective outcome of LSS continuous improvement activities that actually move the needle and contribute to the bottom line.

Where most Lean and Six Sigma efforts go awry is that they are often undertaken solely for purposes of having a Lean or Six Sigma effort in the organization. Great care needs to be taken to align the efforts with overall strategy and objectives, and to prioritize projects based on such overarching alignment. Again, focus on efforts that actually move the needle.



Let's back to the big picture

Forrest Breyfogle wrote:

Delphi won many Shingo prizes for their Lean work but look where they are at financially as a business. Lean is powerful and has much going for it as a philosophy, but it is not a business system. We need to get out of silo thinking when creating and executing Lean projects. We need to step back to the big picture. What organizations need is the creation of healthy policies with an integration of scorecards, strategic planning, business improvement efforts, and control so that the enterprise as a whole benefits. With an Integrated Enterprise Excellence (IEE) business governance system, organizations can accomplish this so that Lean projects are created and executed where the company's bottom-line is benefited the most. An American Management Association article (first link below) describes how an organization used Lean as a tool within an IEE business governance system, where the enterprise as a whole benefited. The article describes a 9-step business governance roadmap which has strategy creation as step number 5, not set 1. With the IEE approach strategies are created after formally blending innovation with analytics to determine where strategic efforts, including Lean application, need to focus so that the enterprise as a whole benefits.



A continuous improvement mindset

David Yearby wrote:

Lean thinking needs to be coupled to a continuous improvement mindset. This is what unlocks the immediate & visible improvements. If you want to see rapid returns for your change investment actions need to happen in parallel - small steps across the whole process flow will deliver day over day benefits.



Compete in a lean environment

Barry Stuart wrote:

Most lean projects fail because they are viewed as an end; a finish line. Today our organizations need to realize that being able to compete in a lean environment is the cost of getting in the game. It is the threshold not the finish line.

Those companies that succeed 5-10 years from now are those that are looking beyond lean to the next great idea.



A solution to a problem and not an end in itself.

Kerry Fox wrote:

Not only is lean thinking not dead or seriously ill, it is growing into areas well beyond the manufacturing world. Check out how lean thinking is used to improve the health care process. As with any methodology or philosophy, it must be applied as a solution to a problem and not an end in itself.



Understanding and support it from the top down

Dennis Kalnas wrote:

Lean thinking should be a mind set a way to conduct business. It can be applied to any process. Lean thinking is really "culture change" and buy the way culture change for any organization is very difficult. To be successful at Lean the organization needs to understanding and support it from the top down. No one or a hand full of people can do it alone. Leaders need to embrace the ideas of reducing waste, being more efficient at what we do and always "looking to do what we did today better tomorrow".

Things like; pull systems, Kanban, Poka-Yoke, cycle time reduction and 5S are all tools or things that can be used to gain improvement. Implementing Kaizen events and empowering continuous improvement teams (CIT's) help get you there. But these all have an objective. Once the objective is met you need another objective. I believe true lean is forever ongoing because technology and process are always improving. The key is to ask what in "non-value" to the organization and it's customers and then how can we eliminate it.



A terrible decision

J.J. Cartledge wrote:

I certainly don't think Lean is dead or ill. I believe it is becoming more and more crucial for business to create a cultural of change using both Lean and Six Sigma. Lean in a mature organization should be transparent. It is not necessarily dead it is just the way that a company does business and may becoming more transparent then in start. It is part of every process plan and every operation. Waste is removed and velocity and flexibility are injected by allowing the customer to set CTQ standards. It is a terrible decision not to embrace Lean and an injustice to the stockholders, employees and ultimately to the customer by not approaching business with Lean Six Sigma principles. Projects can fail for a number of reasons to include poor sponsorship, lack of senior management support, no follow up, or simply a poorly selected project. It is the responsibility of practitioner of Lean Six Sigma to guide the teams and senior management around these pitfalls. A company that does not embrace the lean cultural is missing opportunities that secure their future.



Lean tools are part of a holistic approach

Ron Chandler wrote:

Most often Lean Thinking fails because the "thinker" wants to pick and choose what part of the thinking he/she wants to apply. The tools in of themselves are part of a holistic approach that is greatly interdependent. A VSM event, needs a pull system and a lean accounting system to support the activity and provide a real measure of value.

Several years ago I published "Dude, Where's my Cost Savings?" bemoaning the terrible integration of Lean in the domestic automotive industry with clear examples of why organizations will kill Lean Thinking in spite of their best intentions to embrace it.



Any well-managed organization is lean

FRANK FEATHER wrote:

You know, "lean thinking" is just another modern-day fad buzzword.

Any well-managed organization is lean, as part of its culture.

But these concepts come and go. Sometimes they get embedded and become the unspoken way of doing things. In other cases, the idea gets neglected or falls by the wayside.

However, I have not experienced "lean thinking" as a cause of project failure. On the contrary, "lean thinking" is an essential element of project success.



Go the genba to see and learn

Gianluca Murgia wrote:

lean thinking, TPS, kaizen are often consider "fashion" words, but many people and company don't understand their deep meaning, so bad understanding causes bad projects and so failures.

I saw somebody wrote that "go the genba to see and learn" couldn't be useful to learn. In my company, Toyota Motor Corporation, and especially in my division, kaizen division, we usually use these words meaning that you cannot get a good understanding and so an appropriate decision if you look only at the data, reports and KPIs without looking directly what the market is. Going to the genba and observing deeply is the basic point to understand the market where the things happen, where the customer is.

Even Toyota, in this hard period, knows that we should come back to our origins: genchi genbutsu, kaizen and teamwork.

kanban poka-yoka and all the other things are only tools, if you think that a tool could get success without a correct usage and approach, you cannot ever get any success.



A better way of doing things

Mauricio Leal wrote:

Lean thinking and all we've learned from Toyota's Senseis is worthless if leadership doesn't encourage people to go to the genba and practice "Genchi Genbustsu" (go, see and understand by observation of facts). The continuous improvement tools, methodologies are great but we must remember that change only take place when people (leadership inclusive) experience and get convinced to a better way of doing things. I realized "lean experts" too much focused on tools rather than the entire phylosophy and that's why in my opinion, the initiatives often fails. I strongly recommend for those who want to go through sustainable improvements journey to read The Toyota Way from Jeffrey K. Liker.



Use the tools correctly

James Deaton wrote:

This is a great question and I think the problem lies in the short term thinking that often accompanies lean. Yes some companies do arrive at lean making it seem as "flavor of the month." In addition, leaning a process should be focused on wing to wing vs. a process level piece (how many times have you heard someone cutting what they thought was waste in their process only to create larger cost on a downstream process). Lean isn't dead or seriously ill, practitioners need to use the tools correctly not just a means to justify an end.



The focus on the culture of Lean

Andrea Scully wrote:

The answers to this interesting question that have been posted so far are very diverse and enlightening. I find myself wondering how much of the "improper execution" is because of the focus on the tools of Lean instead of the culture of Lean; and, how much of our society of instant gratification is exacerbating this?

I completely understand our executives being under extreme pressure to deliver financial performance and as a result they are looking for a quick fix, something the tools of Lean seem to promise and therefore are willing to give Lean a go. However, how much is a quick fix really going to fix things if executives just go back to their "bad old ways" of management? It's like yo-yo dieting, you lose some weight in the beginning but then gain it back and then some when you stop, ending up heavier than when you started.

I completely understand practitioners wanting to get some momentum going by delivering on the quick fixes that the executives are looking for and getting the Gemba workers excited about participating in something that can really make their work better. However, if Lean practitioners are only focused on giving the executives what they want instead of what they need, it's only a matter of time before they get "thrown out with the bath water."

So I guess what it really comes down to is managing expectations. Executives need to manage the expectations of their boards and their investors, ensuring that all are aware that Lean is a way of being and that it takes an average of 3-5 years to become entrenched enough to be sustained for the long haul. Lean practitioners need to manage the expectations of their executives and all the workers in the company by under promising and over delivering, ensuring that everyone understands that Lean is a mentored discipline and that even the practitioners have Sensei that they turn to when needed -- I know I do and am always grateful beyond measure for his guidance.



Lean is a relentless curiosity to improve

Vic Uzumeri

"I have my own definition of Lean. To me it is a relentless curiosity applied to understanding and improving the 'flow model' of an operation or business.

That will never go out of fashion.

What goes in and out of fashion are the cycles of enthusiasm, disillusion and boredom that follow various writers' and gurus' attempts to draw attention back to that underlying process. We have seen JIT, Kaizen, TQM, Lean, Six Sigma, TOC, etc. all go through the public enthusiasm cycle. We will probably see the cycle repeat in the future.

Underneath it all, are the serious companies that understand flow and are relentlessly curious about any opportunity to improve it - i.e., Toyota."



Lean is a journey not a destination

Joe Green wrote:

Lean is all about improvement.

You don't want to try to start out at the highest lean level as an entrepreneur, you just want to start at a workable level. Once the business gets going, that is when you try to improve processes and eliminate waste.

Understand, you need to view lean not as a destination but instead as a journey.

Take a physically overweight person, they don't just out of the blue decide to become "lean" and they cannot wave a magic wand and make themselves instantly "lean". What they can do, though, is start eating better, exercising more, and paying more attention to the ins and outs.

This is the same thing in a company. You don't go as a company from 500 pounds straight to a cut 190 after a 4 hour meeting. What you do is get started on the right track. Find some way to become 1% more efficient. The next day, find another way to become 1% more efficient.

In terms of weight, your company will go from 500, to 495, to 490, to 485, to 480, and so on. Eventually, if you stick with process improvement and creating a more efficient work force, your 500 pound company will shrink down to a cut 190 and when you do it will have been worth all the work.



Long life to Lean thinking

BILLE BATY wrote:

Lean thinking is not "dead" as long as one person/business believes in it and is thinking lean. The concept was in place long before the term was coined and will still be here when the "new name" takes effect. Any one remember "paradigm shifts



A better chance for companies in dire straits

Jim Dacey wrote:

I think it has a better chance now than ever before. Unless companies are against the wall, they resist the kind of changes Lean Thinking involves. Today a large number of them are in dire straits. A few of those may go the lean route. With Lean Thinking being almost a philosophical approach to running a business, rather than a silver bullet product fad they can buy, the changes necessary to make it work... well, its not likely to be the next big business fad.

I have suggested Lean approaches to numerous companies in situations where they could have saved millions of dollars and even then, they talked about it and then did something costly and ineffective.

Wish I had a more uplifting input on this, I have been a Lean advocate since long before it was called that.. back when World Class Manufacturing was about the only book on the subject.



Let the (lean) ideas speak for themselves

Jeremy Sexton wrote:

I agree with several of the other respondents here who have said that the incorrect execution of the philosophy can be its demise. This isn't to say that those companies or individuals who have attempted to implement lean principles cannot have success, I just think it will be more difficult to convince them to attempt lean principle implementation because they have been burned already. We have experienced this within my company and it has been difficult to convince the leadership to implement any ideas tied to lean philosophy after they have had an unsuccessful attempt in the past. As simple as it sounds, changing terminology can be effective in knocking down some of those walls. Try to introduce improvements to increase throughput but don't call them "lean" or "TPM". Just present the ideas, knowing you are using lean methods and let the ideas speak for themselves.



Use it or lose it

Hiram Rivera wrote:

Lean thinking is like any other process "use it or lose it". The concepts are basically Deming driven and work if applied properly and with conviction. True Lean successes come over time, not overnight. So Lean is not dead or alive it is there to be used or ignored.



A learning and growth experience

Horst Noglik wrote:

I always felt lean thinking is an excellent tool and forces data driven and therefore rational thinking. As pointed out in other answers it may be useful to view as a learning and growth experience.

I usually have a debriefing meeting after any completed project to discuss what was good and what could be improved next time around. Especially if a project fails, it is an excellent learning opportunity. A word of caution on this if you want to try, have a strong facilitator so that the debrief is not about assigning blame but remains constructive.



The soft side is to be tackled by lean leaders

Christian Boland wrote:

Like a lot of the above commentators are putting forward, lean is neither dead nor ill.

But I observed a number of lean initiatives failing or delivering poor results because of too little attention given to the soft side (that many among us dislike or cannot deal with effectively). And that cause actually is met in other change projects.

The soft side is to be tackled by lean leaders (not the black belt, the very team leader).

McK have identified the 6 habits of lean leaders:

- A focus on operating processes (do you often meet the ones doing the job?)
- Root cause problem solving (use problems as teaching opportunities)
- Clear performance expectations (and compatible with the existing performance framework if any)
- Aligned leadership (across silos)
- A sense of purpose (is this new?)
- Support for people (if front workers create value, be there to support them... yes bring them coffee if that helps.)

(Ref: McK Quarterly Nov 2008 - From lean to lasting.)

So it's very much like shifting attention of the line managers away from firefighting and giving them room to coach.



Lean must become the **way of doing business**

Keith Johnson wrote:

Interesting questions and it seems to have generated much debate. My two pennies worth - lean thinking is never born if the company does not embrace it as a philosophy and way of doing business. Implementing tools and talking the lingo is all well and good but the reality is that unless lean is embraced by the organisation from the top down and they are prepared to have the courage to make some big leaps, then lean won't have a chance to live.



Never abandon the lean principles in favor of "cheap."

Dave Kreul wrote:

The principles of lean are not dead, but too many people have abandoned the principles in favor of "cheap." Over the past 10 or 15 years too many manufacturing companies have given up the fight for lean thinking and efficiency. We have instead outsourced our work to countries that have low wages. As we have done so we have abandoned the "Just-In-Time" principles that lead to lean business and total quality management, choosing instead to fill our warehouses with low priced imports. Many of us tied up our own cash and borrowed some more to pay for this inventory, and now it sits in our bulging warehouses.

If we had stuck to our lean - Just In Time - principles, we would have instead focused on reducing waste, maximizing true productivity. Perhaps we would have been more competitive with the low-cost labor nations. If we had approached our strategic decisions with lean business principles in mind, we would have recognized the true cost of ordering many months in advance (due to shipping time) in quantities that are nearly impossible to know.

We likely would have found that lowest purchase price isn't always lowest ownership cost.



My recipe for change management success

Betsy Burtis wrote:

This exchange reminds me of the statement, "The only diet that works is the one you stick to." Over 70 % of organizational change initiatives fail. There is no silver bullet here; I agree with David Stouffer that the follow through on any project is critical. Change goes through a bell curve that has push back at the top of the curve. Too many people give up when the resistance is high.

My recipe for change management success: Take the lean principles, or any new process improvement methodology, mix it with equal amounts of transparency and input from all levels, and finish it off with a commitment to follow through.



Lean require long term leadership, direction and dedication

David Chance wrote:

The problem with "lean" management, manufacturing, services, etc. is not the skill set it teaches. In my 25 years experience "Lean" SPC, JIT, etc all require long term leadership, direction and dedication. Think of world-class sport figures, companies, TV/Radio personalities - long horizon goals and lots of sweat. Outsourcing, China, etc. is a cop-out for most corporate CEO's - don't have to think, don't have to work. Just ask GM, Chrysler, their "partners - government, vendors and labor". Don't want to plan and think for the good of the whole - look what happens. Gaining a real competitive advantage is a way of life to be sustained, not a chess game to be played and forgotten.



Lean is out of fashion

Adrian Ianza wrote:

Lean is out of fashion as:

- 1) On launch too often too much is promised and too little is delivered too slowly
- 2) Senior managers are uncomfortable with locking away key workers for Kaizen events as there is no cover
- 3) There is a shortage of trained, experienced professionals, and black belts are too easily come by. Most "black belts" should be busted down to yellow or white belts as their poor performance detracts from the tool and finally
- 4) The once great founding company - GE - is at worst bust, or at the very least staggering to find its way

My suggestion is to just keep doing what you are doing, as the tools are impressive, just dispense with the label. If it truly works, there is no need for the label, just sell your results!



The resistance to change: that's the root failure's cause

Fabio Furlan wrote:

As I just read the answers, I agreed with all of them. Besides been a Lean Facilitator in GM, I take part in a Lean Forum in my region, and all of us came up to the conclusion that the root cause in Lean Implementation's failure is the resistance to change. Lean is top-down, and, if you do not have the proper support and commitment from the people on the top, Lean is likely doomed to die.



If methods are not coming from the top down

Charles A. Wilson, Ph.D. wrote:

In my opinion, if all the right people are in place, but the Lean Methods/Six Sigma methods are not coming from the top down, then they are destined to fail. No ifs ands or buts.



Daniele Semenzato wrote:

One hundred per cent with you when you say "the root cause in Lean Implementation's failure is the resistance to change" and obviously "resistance to change" very often involve the board not only shopfloor or white colars.

Lean peolpe knows and daily practise a terrific tools set featured, designed and proofed to eliminate any kind of waste but, here is the big questinon , do they likely have ever trained, practiced and succesfully experinced as strong and as efficent tools set suited for change management ?

Someone please tell me a word of confidence about that



Lean tools are off-base for service

Tripp Babbitt wrote:

Lean thinking has become less thinking and too tool oriented. I can't speak for manufacturing, but for service these manufacturing tools have created havoc. People running around 5S and finding standard work before understanding customer demand, may be good for manufacturers but off-base for service. There are differences.



lack of commitment

Andrea Furlanetto wrote:

"Lean is not dead. Lean is not ill.

Sometimes it is difficult for it to evolve from the stage of 'set of tools' to the one of 'mindset and approach'.

I think that, wherever issues are encountered, they are mostly related to cultural mismatch or lack of commitment.

In other words: it is hard to be lean in an obese company, and vice versa :-)"



lean procedures are deemed to fail.

Olivier Andre wrote:

Lean / Lean tools are about reducing waste ... TPS / Systems Thinking is about avoiding waste in the first place - this what Toyota was doing (before loosing its way becoming number 1) (others are still doing it)

Therefore lean methods / lean procedures are by essence deemed to fail.



Lean Thinking is not (only) as a cost cutting exercise

Calum Clements wrote:

'Lean Thinking' is a term over used and dangerously practiced by the uninitiated. Creating Lean Systems enables more effective use of resources and building on what works. Lean Thinking has become to be thought of as cost cutting exercise and as a result tarnished the term. I have used Lean Thinking, not as a cost cutting exercise, but a resource improvement exercise (ie creating spare capacity on my job load for new work by using standard tools online tools). In doing so have managed to reduce operating costs, improve data accuracy and develop a system for data management that is nationally recognised as best practice. I have been told that it is an almost perfect example of 'Lean Thinking'.



To apply the right method to the right scenario

David Herrera, wrote:

I've noticed that companies that fail in lean initiatives are those that apply the latest fad only. Lean is the philosophy of eliminating waste but in that philosophy spawns a plethora of methods. The misconception is often that a single method employed across an enterprise is sufficient. Well, the fact of the matter is that you have to apply the right method to the right scenario/process. Where you thought 6 Sigma was enough, VSM may have been needed as well.



People must know the factory (Blu collar and white collar)

Fier Luigi Fabbroni wrote.

The “Lean production” isn’t a project but it is a program (like a journey) where the aim is to change the approach of people at the job. So for this reason the main points are:

- 1- The top management support the program not only with word but with activity (walk to talk; guide with examples). If the management wish to implement the program they can achieve the aim only if they are convinced.
- 2- Involved all people in the factory (Blu collar and white collar)
- 3- Very good pre - preparation in order to the top and middle management understand the basic principle and take care the program

I don’t have any direct experience in “Lean production” but I have a direct experience in implementation of “20 Key” program. This program is like a “lean production, 6 sigma, TPM; ecc..” and after 16 month the result that we have achieved are very impressive for e.g -40% of people absenteeism, increase the production for 3%, reduction of energy consumption 5%, reduction of working capital 25%.

I candidly suggest to have a industrial program like 20 keys, lean production, 6 sigma because they are very helpful for the business.



Lean, six sigma, etc... are “overused buzzwords”

Patrick Walters wrote:

I have yet to read all of the responses, but my opinion is and has always been that "lean implementations" fail because of the overuse of buzzwords exactly like "lean implementations". To me the words lean, six sigma, etc... are overused buzzwords that make the ideas behind them fail when we focus too much on what we name them. In reality, we should be focusing on what we are trying to achieve, the goal, not on the answer, or what we call that answer.



Without a lifestyle change the weight (waste) comes back

Nikki Willett wrote:

Yes I believe that Lean has become dangerously ill. Unfortunately Lean has become equated in today's economy as "Less is More." The focus is on specific projects for cutting corners, resources and cost (cutting the FAT) or meeting aggressive company metrics (meeting the GOAL without understanding the underlying objective). And like every fad crash diet, you may see some immediate results and you may meet your goal, but without a lifestyle change the weight comes back. What Lean needs is an "Overhaul" - an emphasis of a cultural change where projects are looked at not just one at a time but long-term for sustainability of continuous improvement. "Less is More" shouldn't just be about focusing on the FAT but looking at how a change within our organization can drive us to new innovations, competitive advantage and ultimately operational excellence.



Senior executives must really embrace Lean/(LSS

Declan Cooper wrote:

After reading all of these great answers and points about Lean (and Six Sigma), there is not much left to say.

However, I did have an experience working for a company that started to employ Lean Six Sigma, but struggled with the framework in which to engage those who should have a vested interest and the process/framework for implementing change, and focusing on BVA, and VA and reducing NVA (waste).

In other words, the senior executives must really embrace Lean/(LSS), as a religion or philosophy as part of the fabric of company operations, or the Lean managers may find that their efforts and the time involved to have minimal impact, and become a process that needs evaluation within itself.



This is a “two dimensions” question

rama krishna munagada wrote:

The question has two dimensions – the first one is about lean projects; and the second is about lean thinking. Thanks to all the above answers, some are specifically about projects, many of them are about thinking.

- ◆ Firstly, about projects: If the lean project fails, the failure can be attributable to management – it might be improper planning, selection, or lack of commitment in execution etc.. many answers suggest this. One more aspect to this – as told by Gary Hammel - is “we can not solve new problems using existing approaches”. How true! global credit crisis, global melt down, ‘global warming’ etc, are all relatively new problems/situations. All these global problems, to a large extent, are external to the organizational boundaries, and their impact/symptoms are seen as mass-lay-offs, lean management failures, financial loss, etc.. The symptomatic treatment never completely solves any problem. Lean emphasizes, fundamentally, to look critically inward (organization’s processes), now the situation demands, look seriously outward (stake holder’s processes). When the scope of the lean ends at the organizational boundaries, is it fair to criticise the lean for the symptoms? However, it is the opportune time to re-examine the existing methods/tools, brining in new thinking, and formulating new/creative approaches.
- ◆ Now, about thinking: Lean Management failure should not be construed as Lean Thinking (philosophy) failure. It not out of place to remember the saying of Mahatma Gandhi – ‘there is enough on this Mother Earth for everyone’s NEED, but nothing for anyone’s GREED’. Hence, lean thinking is very much alive and contemporary not only from organizational point of view, but also, very importantly, from sustainability point of view.



There is nothing new under the sun.

Ron [Ronald A.] Hayes, C.P.M. wrote:

If we go back to the fundamental start of the science of Industrial Engineering and then compile all the modifications suggested by Deming et.al. we will find that "Lean" as a word applied to what started out as engineered workflow could be dead but then some person will come along and apply some other keyword to the same concept. It is almost as if we need a keyword before we can embrace a fundamental business practice.

I suppose if we someday have a flawless, foolproof robotic system that studies then applies "Lean", we would then reduce the incidence of error...of failed projects. But then we (humans) would no longer have the benefit of analyzing both current conditions and also our failed conditions, which drives us to question, to hypothesize, to think critically, to find a solution.

A few years ago, when the term "Lean" got lots of press, I thought that I had a new methodology to learn. Until I studied what "Lean" was...a rehash of the collective methods starting with fundamental Industrial Engineering. Sometimes, I think humans make life too complicated out of the need of some people to achieve their 15 minutes of fame by "inventing" the next big thing.



Lean is “agile” for Software Dept.

allan kelly wrote:

Lean is alive and well in the Software Development field. It provides the inspiration and underlying thinking behind "Agile development", i.e. Agile is a type of Lean.



Lean thinking needs an holistic vision, not only tools and methods

paolo mario menon wrote:

In my opinion it's a matter of knowledge. I mean that if you don't know what happens you react in all the ways as per answers to the question about failing. It's the "fear of unknown": resistance, flight, fight.

Let's consider a Group Management; do the CFO, HR, Marketing, Sales, R&D can say they "lean think"? and in case of yes, you sure they act accordingly?

It's a matter of coherence, an holistic vision, not only tools and methods. Before Lean Manufacturing it is Lean Thinking in ALL dpts, offices, processes. And the coherence is first of all, in measure system, economic kpi's. Money first! Accounting coherence. In my experience I didn't see anybody using lean accounting as well as a "real" organogram by processes, hence



Work in progress – how to answer and how to vote

This is absolutely a not definite answer list ! You can contribute any time connecting to the linkedin group discussion following this link:

http://www.linkedin.com/answers/business-operations/manufacturing/OPS_MAN/462077-4210681?browseIdx=2&sid=1240905531088&goback=.amq

And Vote your answers' highlights to:

<http://polls.linkedin.com/p/36734/nyizk>



Welcome to the Lean thinker's Club

