"Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication." Leonardo da Vinci

Learning to See, and eliminating those wastes should be on the top of your priorities. Developing small wins of discovering wastes and converting them into value was the heart of Toyota Production System. From the beginning, where your customer places an order to the point when the customer receives what he asked for, there are many processes and activities in the way. Your customer is not willing to pay for you, because you just have the cutting edge technology, or the best experts in a certain field, customers only pay for what solves their problems regardless of what you do to come up with that product or this service. The only one who cares about your product/service is You!

“All we are doing is looking at the time line, from the moment the customer gives us an order to the point when we collect the cash. And we are reducing that time line by removing the non-value-added wastes.” Taiichi Ohno

The Socratic Method to Unlock People’s Capability
A lean leader should realize the incredible power of questions and how it could shape people’s thoughts and let them learn virtually anything. In fact the entire Socratic Method is based on the teacher is doing nothing but asking questions, directing the student’s focus and getting them to come up with their own answers.

“He who asks questions cannot avoid the answers” Cameron Proverb

Seven questions that will help in understanding the seven wastes and to stir and develop the "lean mindset" in your team.

1. Are we producing too much or too soon?
2. Are operators waiting for parts to arrive or for a machine to finish a cycle?
3. Are we keeping conveyance to a minimum?
4. Are we over-processing parts?
5. Do we keep on the workstation more parts and components than the minimum to get the job done?
6. Do we keep motion that does not contribute directly to value-added to a minimum?
7. Do we avoid the need for rework or repairs?
Hiroyuki Hirano’s classification

Stability is a key element in sustaining the success of Toyota. Sustaining stability in the 5Ms; Man, Machine, Method, Material and Management is the first goal that a lean leader has to focus on, but it would be a little bit harder to reach stability, when the 5Ms are fatty. By maintaining stable 5Ms and freeing them from wastes, you can accomplish your highest targets of Quality and Safety.

The 5MQS scheme identifies seven types of waste, five of which begin with the letter “M”: Man, Material, Machine, Method, and Management. The “Q” in the 5MQS formula stands for Quality and the “S” for Safety.

This figure shows the seven categories of wastes and how they include many hidden opportunities for improvement if we just stop and take a look. Although the first classification for wastes by Ohno is the most famous one, the other two are very valuable and could be used. In my perspective, Monden’s classification is a re-formulation of what Ohno stated (The 7 wastes) and it gives us an understanding of what the root cause of overproduction – excessive production resources. On the other hand, Hirano’s framework is a good one for organizations that start their lean implementation, as it directly hits the five foundations (5Ms) for any organization looking for stability, quality and safer workplace.

Begin with the end in mind

All things are created twice, so having a framework for identifying wastes in mind is a good way to keep your people motivated to waste elimination. Although, it is not a necessity that they’re going to discover wastes just by knowing that, but visualizing the end target in mind and keep moving toward it is better than getting to hunt wastes in a chaotic manner. After that, you can start your Waste Walk individually or with cross-functional team to identify Muda at your workplace.

Last but not least, eliminate waste purposefully, get the most out of the Waste Walk, and let your team experience the power of lean by unlocking the hidden opportunities for improvement.