Lean Thoughts

Implementing a LEAN Journey

Many organizations adopt Lean for the wrong reason. Perhaps they visited a plant that was well organized so they feel if they implement 5S they will become Lean, others adopt Lean Principals because of a corporate edict.

The adoption of Lean is to;
• Maximize Resources
• Minimize Waste
• Become Agile and Predictable

Indeed many organizations seize on implementing 5S as their version of Lean. This is understandable since it does create a huge positive visual impact. However if 5S becomes your primary thrust it will just become a major housekeeping event and an expense.

The focus of your Lean Journey needs to be based on providing Value … what is the customer willing to pay for ! Second, you have the technology and a product or service differenator but you need people to deliver.

Creating employee engagement is always a challenge no matter how big or small your organization is. People need to feel attached to the brand just as much as the consumer respects or admires your brand.

So leadership becomes important … adopting a Servant Leadership style is crucial to the success of your Lean Journey. This is complemented through your Visual Management infrastructure where you can quickly see the abnormal for the normal and so can your people. It then becomes important that your team feels comfortable and empowered to initiate corrective action.

The Servant Leadership style comes into play that you confirm the corrective action and endorse the resources required.

Leadership style or Lean Methodologies is a little bit like the Chicken and Egg story … which to do first?

You need to do both concurrently seasoned with a healthy dose of formal problem solving. In the case of formal problem solving just don't Focus on one methodology but offer a suite of methodologies.

Now back to Lean Methodology deployment where should you start?

Focus on Velocity

Observe, Observe and Observe how your product or Service Is being delivered.

Where Lean Thoughts can become Reality

"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow."

Ronald. E. Osborn

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Identify areas of opportunity to deliver it Better, Faster and with improved quality. Do not get distracted by seeing how you can reduce cost.

Minimize Waste …

Categorize your products and service and how they get delivered. Most likely you can categorize them as;
*   Runners … Daily deliveries
*   Repeaters … monthly to quarterly deliveries
*   Strangers ... Random deliveries

With a focus on Runners minimize Walk and Reach to perform the assembly of the product or delivery of the Service. Your Team members should be able to access what they need to perform the task in under 30 seconds. This will then stimulate your 5S activities with a solid ROI.

You should also at this point observe and engineer your material conveyance methodology which should at the same time help you reduce your batch size and hopefully force you to develop single piece flow perhaps in cells.

A big component of Single-Piece-Flow is adopting the method of Chaku-Chaku or literally translated into Load-Load where the output of one operation automatically becomes the input of the next operation.

The plenishment of components and products should be based on a "pull" system or can be controlled using a Kanban which will meter the replenishment based on your consumption rate.

In the second category of Repeators complete the above strategies but perhaps using a timing of 2 minutes and in the case of Strangers 15 minutes.

But back to Servant Leadership … your front-line team is only focused on completing the task at hand and a bit concerned about what you want them to do next … so they will need some vehicles of reflection. Of which there are several …

TPM (Total Productive Management) .. A check-list based methodology which acts like an alarm clock for the employee's brain to make sure the environment is save and predictable and helps with the early detection of potential problems.

Hourly Run Boards so operators can detect when a process is migrating out of control.

And the most powerful … Daily Report-Outs where the team can reflect on the previous 24 hour performance while discussing the upcoming 24 hour requirements and addressing any potential concerns before they become reality.

Guess what … now you are implementing a Lean Journey

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