

Lean Enterprise Academy

LEA e-Letter - 26 May 2009



Lean Summer Reading

Dear Lean Community Member

In the last year or two we have learnt more and more about what makes Toyota's lean management system so successful. The emerging literature grows by the day and it is hard to keep up with it all. Someone asked me the other day what are the best books to read on lean management this summer. This is my list.

Thankfully many years ago Koichi Shimokawa and Takahiro Fujimoto, two leading Japanese academic experts on lean, conducted a series of unique interviews with Taiichi Ohno and his colleagues about the original experiments that led to the Toyota Production System. They are finally available in English in **The Birth of Lean**. Toshiro Norusawa and John Shook have collected some of the original training material used by Toyota in the original Japanese and English translation in **Kaizen Express**. It would be very good to compare this with the lean training material being used in your organisation.

Jeff Liker has done us all a great service by writing down the current Toyota management practice in his most recent book, **Toyota Culture**. And Satoshi Hino, a very astute Toyota watcher who worked for many years at Mazda, gives a really interesting view of what lies **Inside the Mind of Toyota**. Particularly fascinating are his observations on how Toyota brought together the lean knowledge developed by Ohno and others and the knowledge about quality they learnt from Deming. Toyota's synthesis of the two still makes them the reference model for both lean and quality.

Learning about Toyota is one thing – working out what it all means for our own management systems is another. When John Shook worked for Toyota he discovered that Ohno based his training material on the **Training Within Industry** material developed for the US government during World War II to teach newcomers, often women, to replace factory workers who had gone off to fight. Jeff Liker tells the story on **Toyota Talent**, but it is really worth reading the original material. This is now available in Donald A Dinero, **Training within Industry**, and the accompanying **TWI Workbook** by Patrick Graupp and Robert J Wrona. Ohno saw how this combination of learning and doing in bite sized chunks was the most effective way for people to learn how to do lean. Ironically most US firms ignored this material after the war, which lay hidden for many years.

Probably the most insightful building block of lean management is the use of the A3 process to teach managers how to think about the right things in the right way. Durwood Sobek and Art Smalley's describe this tool in detail in **Understanding A3 Thinking**. While John Shook's **Managing to Learn** walks through the use of this process from both the teacher and the pupils' perspective. As you read this tale you begin to understand how powerful and transformative this tool is for changing the way we manage. This tool is taught to every manager joining Toyota and forms the framework for every planning and problem solving activity.

One of the biggest challenges at the top of any organisation is to prioritise the vital few things the organisation needs to focus on and then to engage in a dialogue down the organisation to translate these plans into actions. Two excellent books describe how you can use policy or strategy deployment in your organisation are Thomas L

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Jackson's **Hoshin Kanri for the Lean Enterprise** and Pascal Dennis's **Getting the Right Things Done**.

If all this is a bit heavy going and your team learns best from telling stories then I still think **The Gold Mine** is the best lean novel around. Michael Balle's sequel called **The Lean Manager** ought to be on everybody's reading list this summer. Give it to your team to read on holiday and then use it for your study group when you get back.

Finally healthcare is one of the most active areas of lean at the moment. Follow the early steps of one of the pioneering lean hospitals in David Fillingham's **Lean Healthcare** and follow how a top management team transforms their hospital in our own new lean workbook by Marc Baker and Ian Taylor called **Making Hospitals Work**. That should keep you busy for a while. Happy reading.

Yours sincerely

Daniel T Jones

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