



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
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In Collaboration With



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GE Capital

Lean Practices: Enabling A 'Lean Culture'

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A critical challenge facing middle market firms is how to make their transformation processes (e.g., production processes or service delivery processes) more effective. Lean may be an answer to this challenge.

Lean is a comprehensive philosophy backed up by practices and methods for seeking out and removing non-value-added work in organizations. Organizations that have successfully implemented and are sustaining lean continue to reap operational and financial benefits.

For lean initiatives to be embraced and sustained within organizations employees have to agree with values and assumptions that underlie the lean philosophy and they have to work and behave in a manner that reflect these values and assumptions.

WHAT FOLLOWS ARE TWO USEFUL "TOOLS" FOR ASCERTAINING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S LEAN JOURNEY:

1. The first, [Is your organization really engaging in Lean?](#), is a checklist that organizations can use to ascertain how far along they are with respect to making Lean part of the organizational fabric. The more indicators checked, the farther along an organization is on its lean journey.
2. The second, [Are you sure that your employees have really bought into Lean?](#), is a quick questionnaire that organizations can use to gauge whether or not employees agree with the values and assumptions that underlie the lean philosophy. The more agreement there is, the more likely that lean initiatives are sustained and not viewed as the "flavor of the month".

INDICATORS THAT YOUR ORGANIZATION IS ON THE LEAN JOURNEY . . .

IS YOUR ORGANIZATION REALLY ENGAGING IN LEAN?

This list contains statements about observable indicators that an organizational unit is subscribing to Lean. The more indicators that can be observed, the more likely an organizational unit is pursuing Lean as a concerted effort.

PLEASE PLACE A CHECK MARK FOR EACH INDICATOR THAT YOU SEE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION. THEN, SUM ALL CHECK MARKS. THE MAXIMUM SCORE IS 17/17.

INDICATORS REGARDING EMPLOYEES

- Indications that employees are actively engaged in problem-solving
- Employees of the organization not treating each other disrespectfully
- Employees working as a team
- Indications that employees are being asked to provide feedback and input

INDICATORS REGARDING WORK SPACES

- Clean work spaces
- Organized work spaces
- No obvious safety hazards

INDICATORS REGARDING CONTROL OF WORK ACTIVITIES

- Clear labeling of where items belong
- Visual display of actual versus target performance
- Visual mechanisms to control work flow
- Clear labeling of items

INDICATORS REGARDING WORK INSTRUCTIONS AND PROCEDURES

- Standardized work procedures as indicated by work instructions
- Visual cues to manage daily work flow, production, etc.
- Standardized work instructions

INDICATORS REGARDING WORK FLOW

- Smooth transfer of work between processing steps
- Minimum inventories required to meet customer demands
- Work being performed with minimal unintended disruptions

VALUES AND ASSUMPTIONS EMBEDDED IN LEAN . . .

ARE YOU SURE THAT YOUR EMPLOYEES HAVE REALLY BOUGHT INTO LEAN?

The more employees agree with these values and assumptions, the less resistant they should be to Lean initiatives and the more likely that Lean initiatives and benefits can be sustained.

PLEASE INDICATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL EMPLOYEES AGREE WITH THESE STATEMENTS:

- 5 = STRONGLY AGREE
4 = AGREE
3 = NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE
2 = DISAGREE
1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE

ABOUT EMPLOYEES AND THEIR PREFERENCES

- Employees want to be trusted
- Employees should be respected
- Employees want to understand why they do the work that they do
- Employees generally want to own the work to which they are assigned
- Employees want to contribute to the well-being of the organization
- Employees generally want to excel at whatever work they are assigned
- Employees are knowledgeable about how best to perform and improve the work to which they are assigned
- When given tools and opportunities, employees are able to improve the work that they do
- Employees are generally willing to learn

ABOUT LEADERS AND THEIR ROLES

- Leaders are coaches who develop the people they have responsibility for
- Leaders provide resources and tools necessary for employees to excel
- Leaders put the interest of the organization above personal gain
- Leaders keep the people they are responsible for informed of important issues that affect them

ABOUT THE SHARING OF INFORMATION

- Important or relevant information should be visually conveyed
- Important or relevant information should be widely communicated
- Important or relevant information should be shared in a timely manner

ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF DECISIONS AND ACTIONS

- Decisions and actions must consider the value to the customer
- Decisions and actions must acknowledge that change is inevitable
- Decisions and actions should be informed by data analyses and facts and not just intuition
- Decisions and actions should not be taken without considering implications for the long-term

ABOUT THE NATURE OF IMPROVEMENT

- There is always room for improvement
- Problems are opportunities to change for the better
- Waste, which is anything that is not of value to customers, should be minimized
- Frequent, ongoing incremental improvements are as valuable as major breakthrough changes.
- Improvement changes should be implemented in a methodical manner
- Improvements are sustained through the interplay of individual efforts and collaborative efforts

ABOUT WORK PROCESSES AND THEIR REQUISITE REQUIREMENTS

- The flow of work across processes should be as simple as possible
- Consistent performance comes from predictable work processes
- Process and outcome variability should be minimized but is unlikely to be completely eliminated.
- Work activities should have a standard for guidance
- Work standards should evolve over time
- Standard work is the reference point for improvement
- Poor work performance is generally caused by poorly designed processes and less frequently by the people working within these processes

FILL IN AVERAGE AND CHECK BELOW TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL EMPLOYEES AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE VALUES AND ASSUMPTIONS EMBEDDED IN LEAN.

- ≥ 4** Employees within your organization have bought into Lean
- ≥ 3, < 4** Your organization may need to further convince employees as to what Lean is and why it is important
- ≤ 3** Your organization is at risk of sustaining Lean initiatives