

Lean Leadership Newsletter

10 Essential Lean-Leadership Tools

Optimising processes, reducing waste, engaging employees

'An environment where people have to think brings with it wisdom, and this wisdom brings with it kaizen [continuous improvement]'. ~Teruyuki Minoura

In this article, we're looking at 10 of the most common Lean-leadership tools and principles which must be present in any successful Lean-Leadership transactional or operational implementation journey.



1. Start With Yourself

It's a fact that competent leaders succeed at getting people to give of their best and constantly strive to improve and motivate. Set aside 5 minutes each day to think about and note down how you manage yourself in your dealings with others. Good leaders treat colleagues as they wish to be treated themselves ask: what engages me, what have I learnt today I can apply tomorrow, how do others perceive the way I manage and, how can I do better?

2. Decide Your Priorities

Leaders are paid to get things done individually, but mainly in cooperation with others. At the end of each week, review your priorities for the next, distinguish between what's important and, what's urgent and plan accordingly. Make sure you have informed others that are to be involved, so they can be fully prepared.

3. Manage Your Time

If you don't plan it, you don't manage it and, time constraints will manage you!

Be realistic in what you can get done in the time available. Ask do I have to do this or can I delegate it, do I have all the information I need, who else needs to be involved, have they been properly briefed etc. At the end of each day complete a quick review of what went well and anything which messed-up in terms of your time management.

4. Manage Your Meetings

First ask yourself "Is a meeting necessary" If the answer is "yes" then make sure all meetings you either lead or attend have a clear, timed agenda. Insist it starts promptly, every discussion item is allocated a time slot, papers are circulated and read in advance, participants seek clarification on specific points before a meeting and that discussion only focuses on action points and follow-up accountability. Allocate a timekeeper and ensure that every meeting concludes with a review of learning points for use next time. Ask: how did we do, did everyone here participate, what can we do better next time?

5. Walk The Talk

Leading a team means that others must feel you are part of it, not just “the boss”. Competent leaders make a real effort to know their people as individuals, so seize opportunities to “walk the talk” get out of your “safe space” lunchtimes, at the vending machine, smile, say good morning...how are you today?. Remember, treat others as you wish to be treated. Leaders earn the respect of their teams, it doesn't come automatically with the job!

6. Use 5S throughout the organisation

5S is the first tool every company should employ. You don't have to start with all five principles at the same time, but without implementing 5S your Lean journey will be much hindered. Whether you are employing lean in the manufacturing or office services environment, the five principles are; sort, set in order, shine, standardise and sustain. Why not complete a 5S health check for your organisation by downloading our 5S questionnaire. Please go to our web site for a detailed description of 5S and the 5S assessment questionnaire.

7. Start mapping your processes

A “**value stream**” shows the movement (“**stream**”) of what the customer **values**. It includes the materials, documents and processes which contribute to what the customer purchases.

Value Stream Mapping (VSM) is the technique of drawing a “map” showing how materials or information flow from supplier to customer. It is used in process-improvement projects: map the current process, decide where to make improvements, and map the desired process. Map the flow of materials or document movement as well as the flow of information.

A VSM diagram is a high-level diagram – it does not examine the details within a processing step.

VSM does not address “how to improve the product” or “how to add more value to the product”. (That is the role of “Value **Chain Analysis**”). VSM addresses how the current product is manufactured, and asks whether a step adds value to that product.

8. Don't pass on faulty work to the next process - Jidoka

Jidoka is a Japanese term. The concept is to authorise the employee that in the case a problem occurs on a process, the employee can stop the process or flow line. Ultimately defective pieces or work will not move to the next station or process. This concept minimises the production of wasted defects, over production and minimises wastes. Also its focus is to understand the causes of problems and then taking preventive measures to reduce them.

9. Get rid of all non-value adding waste – walk the waste

In the heart of the principles of kaizen and lean is the endless pursuit of reducing the 8 wastes. These eight wastes represent unprofitable activities that workers perform with-in the organisation. The eight wastes are; Defects, Inventory, Unnecessary processing, Waiting to receive an order or product from the previous process, Transportation – unnecessary movement of paper, documents, materials, Overproduction of products or documents which are not ordered by the customer and finally the biggest waste in any company is the non-utilised talents of employees.

It is surprising how much of an activity or process can be classified into one or more categories of the 8 Wastes of Lean-Leadership. It is not uncommon to find that over 30% of activities are wasteful and add no value to the product or service and are not necessary in delivering the customer required

order.

10. Develop a Kaizen mind set with all your employees

The **Kaizen philosophy** is drawn from the Japanese word kai which means “**continuous**” and zen meaning “**improvement**” or “wisdom”. The management philosophy, therefore, is defined as making “continuous improvement”—slow, incremental but constant.

Kaizen means continuing improvement involving everyone—managers and workers alike. The Kaizen business strategy involves everyone in an organisation working together to make improvements without large capital investments. As opposed to the Western brand of pragmatic why-fix-it-if-it-works philosophy, Kaizen extends a more optimistic philosophical view: “Everything—even if it works—can be made or done better! Try a Kaizen audit for your company. Please go to our web site for a fuller description of Kaizen and the Kaizen Audit questionnaire.

Key Points:

Whether you or your organisation are at the start of or somewhere along in your ‘lean-Leadership Journey’, it is worth remembering that improving processes on their own will never bring you true operational and sustainable performance. But if you inextricably link engagement of people to continuous improvement then your Lean-Leadership Journey will be a worthwhile place to reach. We hope you have enjoyed this snap-shot article on Lean-Leadership. This is from a series of articles on Lean-Leadership. Your feedback will be appreciated. If you would like to know more please go to our web site www.gnosis.com.pl

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