LEAN – CHANGE OR PERISH

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The changing technological world of today is very different than what it was as little as five or ten years ago. Advanced technology and global competition are the driving forces of this never-ending change. In order to succeed in the 21st century, the manufacturing operations must be Lean, global, modern, technology-focused, highly flexible, quality-driven, and cost competitive, with a well-trained workforce. Lean is a concept that commits a company to a program that eliminates waste, simplifies processes, improves quality and speeds up production.

What Drives Companies to Change

Discontent

The road to positive change starts when discontent grows strong enough that it outweighs the fear of making changes. This discontent can become fuel for positive change. A change in company procedures does not happen all at once but by making many small changes.

If you always do
What you've always done
You'll always be
What you always were

Change - Let go of the Familiar

What keeps people stuck, craving change but unwilling to make it happen? One of the things is the discomfort of saying goodbye to something known for many years and are comfortable with. Unfortunately, staying with the known and comfortable when a change is needed leads to waste and falling behind world leaders.

A company cannot afford to use 10 to 20 year-old technology or processes and expect to compete with those using the latest productivity-enhancing technology. Standing still is like giving up the battle and falling behind to a point where it is impossible to catch up.

- The old and the fixed must always give way to new life and the birth of new things. Before the new things can be adopted, the old must be discarded because if we do not change, we ourselves begin to die, inwardly.

Change Requires Action

Real change does not happen from waking up and deciding to do things differently today. It comes from putting that inspiration into action. Sometimes it is a big, huge, dramatic leap. Most often it is in small steps, practicing and building new habits.

Create a Support System for Change

One of the most important lessons that must be learned is that change must be a team effort in order to be successful. There is always someone else in the picture that made it possible, whether through emotional support, business knowledge, or being a sounding board.

Whenever going through a change, lean heavily on the resources available:

- Consult with friends who have gone through similar experiences and reduce the learning curve by researching on the Internet.

Effective Change

Let's face it, change can feel scary, daunting, and overwhelming. Dealing with and getting comfortable with that change can be one of the biggest challenges we face in pursuing our career passions.

Training the Brain to Change

Everyone is capable of change, for example, think about learning to play a musical instrument. If a person spent a few hours a day for the next few months learning to play the instrument, the structure of the brain would be altered. Many of us find change comes hard and change difficult because we seem to be wired into **the way things are**.

Manufacturers must Change Before it is too Late

The leadership fundamental in today's thinking lies in being able to recognize the inevitability of change and the opportunities it presents. The slowdown in the North American economy after years of record growth and the **new business example**, requires high-tech, e-business systems and lightning-speed responses. When a business is facing this point, the requirement is simple: **change** or **perish**.

Manufacturers Playing Catch-up

Manufacturers today are playing catch-up with progressive companies who have seen the need for change many years ago (some over 50 years) and streamlined their operations with Lean

Tools and advanced machine, process, and information technology. These companies have benefited from by increasing their productivity, producing high-quality goods and providing on-time delivery.

For ailing companies, those struggling to adapt to the new economy and technology, or those simply denying reality, there are several urgent problems that need immediate attention: stabilizing the company and its financial position, getting it back on track, and changing business processes. For troubled companies, radical organizational change is often needed before they can attempt to adopt new ways of doing business.

The Warning Signs

There are warning signs that indicate the need for change: the lack of a long-term business plan, high employee turnover, the loss of a major customer, a lack of innovation, inventory build-up, and financial performance below industry benchmarks. These issues are often symptoms of a track record indicating an inability to change or the company is hoping for the good old days to return.

A *Winner* in today's world of business and manufacturing ***makes commitments*** by incorporating new technologies as soon as they become available and the use of Lean Tools to remove the waste in all their operations and processes to keep up with or beat the competition.

A ***Loser makes Promises*** and takes the attitude of waiting until others have tried it and continues doing things the same way they have been in the past. This is a sure way of losing business, falling behind the competition, never catching up to the leaders and going out of business.