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LEAN WITHOUT BORDERS

Investigating how global firms can
deploy lean consistently across cultures

Organisations featured in this edition include:
Chrysler Group, City of Melbourne, Panalpina,
Flinders Medical Centre, Tuscany's hospital trusts,
Coşkunöz, Coopers Brewery, Dassault Systèmes,
SCGM, Vistaprint, GKN

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World class, the world over: How did Chrysler successfully apply Fiat's world class manufacturing principles and techniques across North America? *Mauro Pino*, Head of WCM, speaks with LMJ

Glocalising lean: Logistics specialist Panalpina has developed an effective way to roll out its LogEx lean programme across 500 branches in 80 countries worldwide

Lean down under: For this month's special, LMJ travels to Australia and speaks to some of the country's leanest organisations, from a pioneering hospital to the municipality of Melbourne

Changing the paradigm: Lean could help France and other European countries to repatriate their service industry, says *Sofiane Boucheikh* of the Institut Lean France.

Success down the line: The development of a thriving front-line leadership is the cornerstone of Turkish company Coşkunöz's lean programme. *Nilay Çetiner* explains why.

On academies and learning



Editorial board member *Bill Bellows* offers his opinion on some of the topics the February issue of *Lean Management Journal* focused on.

In reflecting on the articles in the February edition about Airbus' Quality Lean Academy and the role of a chartered Institute of Lean, I offer a proposal to those who provide both educational resources and qualifications to lean practitioners. While using the educational foundation established in *The Machine That Changed the World*, I suggest being ever mindful of the influence of our respective paradigms in *filtering out data that doesn't fit our own paradigms*.

If we share the vision of James Womack to see "the spread of lean thinking far beyond the factory and far beyond the high wage economies to every corner of the world," wouldn't it be prudent to improve the thinking of *lean thinking* and thereby improve *lean doing*? As advised by author and futurist Joel Barker, "if we want to be lead successfully to the future, we must become aware of our present paradigms, and then be unafraid to replace them."

Before leading to the future, I'd like to focus on events of the not too distant year of 1989 and provide a context for my remarks. In January that year, US President Ronald Reagan delivered his farewell address. In November, the Berlin Wall fell and German unification began. In between, Motorola was working to unveil its Six Sigma Quality efforts and James Womack, Daniel Roos and Daniel Jones were in the fourth year of a highly productive five-year study on the future of the automobile.

At home, I purchased my first Toyota product, a pick-up truck, after growing disappointment with two US brands and one European brand. I also began a self-study effort to explore all things quality, from Philip Crosby and zero defects to Genichi Taguchi and robust design to six sigma quality and the need to reduce defect rates to 6.3 per million opportunities. In a career change away from engineering R&D, my interest was to develop an expertise in

the tools and techniques of continuous quality improvement.

Twenty-four years later, I continue to own and drive Toyota products and also refine my thinking about continuous improvement, including how Toyota operates. In doing so, I'm reminded of a cautionary comment from Myron Tribus, who offered that "what we see depends on what we thought before we looked." In this spirit, I am often reminded that historians are guided by how they are trained to interpret. As opposed to being objective, with the credence of a journalist, the contrary implication is that historians who are trained differently to look at events in our world will likely arrive at distinctly different conclusions.

Systems theorist and educator Russ Ackoff also offered an explanation of this phenomenon. His reasoning was that the adjective in front of the word problem, as in *economic* problem, *education* problem, *medical* problem, *design* problem, or *social* problem, told us a great deal about the vantage point and training of the observer. That is, doctors and nurses see events as *medical* problems while sociologists see events as *social* problems.

I offer these comments as an explanation for why my interpretation of the Toyota Production System, including 24 years of generally happy ownership of five Toyota products, differs significantly from explanations included in *The Machine That Changed the World*. As with reformed cost-accountant H. Thomas Johnson, author of *Profit Beyond Measure*, I interpret Toyota's success as the ability to manage resources, both efficiently and effectively, far better than their competitors have been able to accomplish.

We both view Toyota's highly prized resource management results through a lens of interdependencies that is guided by W. Edward Deming's System

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of Profound Knowledge™. In this regard, we both believe there’s much to be learned by Shoichiro Toyoda’s acknowledgment in 2005, when the chairman and former president of Toyota accepted the American Society for Quality’s Deming Medal, and remarked that “Every day I think about what he meant to us. Deming is the core of our management.”

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The account of the Airbus Quality Lean Academy begins with an inspiring image of students entering a lean temple, where students are coached and developed “with the basis they need to become self-reliant problem solvers and spread the word around the business.” Maintaining an investment in such a dedicated learning environment for 13 years is no small feat, especially with the challenges of the idiosyncrasies of the partner nations.

While “standards are everything at Airbus: from cleaning up the table in the canteen after eating to operating a machine they influence every part of the employees’ working day”, what can be said of the limits to standardisation? Should everything be standardised, including language? Or, should advancements in the implementation of lean, coming from a chartered Lean Institute, include a context for advocating standardisation?

At times, multiple languages and multiple software systems, assisted by translators, might provide a more systemic solution. That is, a more economically viable solution, in which the investment is off-set by the systemic savings. The same could be said for a quality goal of 6.3 defects per million opportunities, the standard for Six Sigma Quality, or zero defects, the quality standard of Philip Crosby. In consideration of the economics of quality improvement, are defect goals of either 6.3 per million or zero always a worthy process improvement outcome? Should variation, waste, and non-value added efforts always be driven to zero? Should determinations on whether activities add value be guided by “what the customer is willing to pay for?” Or, should the context of a greater system be a consideration? While *standards* are even a standard with 5S and even 6S efforts, why not include *System* as a new S. Such an addition could be presented as “5S+1” or “6S+1” to advocate the value proposition of contextual considerations, inspired by the mindful advances in lean that are continually fostered by a Lean Institute. While lean academies such as Airbus’ train new generations of practitioners, research investments coordinated by a Lean Institute could focus on advancing the contextual excellence of lean thinking.