



How do I get maximum buy in when I'm starting Lean?

BY DR. TIMOTHY D. HILL, PH.D., CLSSBB, PMP

I get this question a fair bit. People that have had some exposure to Lean and to Lean culture change typically want everyone to see what they see. They see that improvement opportunities abound and often can't figure out why everyone doesn't want to tackle everything at once!

First, I urge them to remember that they won't convince everyone at once. I tell them to start with the third of their population who is OK with change. Do some Lean events so that you can build up your credibility and have some legitimate bragging rights. After you've got two to three successful kaizens or "just do its" done, then you can add to the roster the people who are from "the show me state." These are the people who are also OK with change, but will sit on the fence until you show them that Lean really works. Lastly, reach out to the CAVE people—Citizens Against Virtually Everything. You know the ones: they resist just about everything. Don't spend time trying to talk them into Lean; let your successes speak for themselves. Those successes and the people you've already converted will help you turn around those CAVE people.

Plus, here are some simple rules to ensure that you'll get maximum buy in when you start your Lean initiative.

Get buy in from senior management

Almost everyone will tell you the buy in from senior management is absolutely necessary before you start, but if you don't have this, do a pilot to show them what Lean savings you can bring.

Understand that starting a Lean culture takes two years

Get them away from thinking that Lean

People that have had some exposure to **Lean and to Lean culture change** typically want everyone to see what they see. They see that improvement opportunities abound and often can't figure out why everyone doesn't want to tackle everything at once!

will happen overnight. I've seen this happen when the senior team thinks that company ABC had Lean happen and all they need to do is copy it at their site. Don't fall into this trap. Take what works at their site and at yours. Don't do an outright copy or you'll be bound to fail.

Get the message out there

Communicate out your successes! Start with sharing your local and small successes. Get the teams together to discuss what worked and what didn't and have them write it down. Put the successes into your local newsletter, post them on your Lean board and talk about them at monthly meetings.

Start with your first wave of people

Like I said, don't expect to change everyone all at once. Stage it out and start with your strengths. Don't have the very first team tackle a huge issue—keep it smaller and more manageable.

Share your successes

Start with your teams. Have them do small celebrations for the team members as they go along and deliver on their improvements. This really does help. Have a tailgate meeting with them as soon as you're done. Talk about what worked and what didn't and write it down on your A3. Remember that in most organizations, the all-important "how we do this" or standard work

exists not on paper, but between someone's ears! That's part of the reason that standard work so rarely catches on.

Convince others with your deeds, not your words

"Be the change that you want to see." It's not a platitude, it's a central part of Lean leadership. If the people can't see you behaving like a Lean leader, why would they participate in Lean? I am constantly telling senior managers and executives to get out of their offices and meeting rooms and to get themselves to the gemba. They need to make themselves a real resource. They need to participate in hoshin planning (i.e., playing catchball to ensure that the people's continuous improvement ideas fit with corporate objectives). They need to see the three "reals" for themselves to deliver solutions that will work and fit with the reality of the work floor and not just "what should work." Sales should never work in isolation from production. HR should not work in isolation from the floor. Practising Lean leadership is important for everyone.

In the words of John Shook, going to the gemba and completing the A3 has three surprising outcomes:

1. Almost always, the problem that you're facing is different from the one that you thought you were facing.
2. Most of us are so eager to find and deliver the solution to a problem that we jump to conclusions

instead of truly investigating the problem's root cause.

3. The A3 process provides a framework for learning in the "place where the work occurs." 🍁

Dr. Timothy Hill is an Industrial and Organizational Psychologist and Certified Lean Six Sigma Black Belt with global expertise in Human Resources/Human Capital. He can be reached at drtim@kyoseicanada.ca.

Question from the floor...

QUESTION: How do you get people comfortable talking about problems and doing daily problem solving?

ANSWER: You should see problem solving as something you talk about daily. As long as people see that there aren't negative consequences to me talking about my problems, they're going to keep talking about theirs. Encourage people to do it. As Mike Morrison, VP and dean of the University of Toyota, said, "We have a crisis of meaning in organizations today... Unfortunately the dominant image of leadership is that we are better, above and ahead of everyone else which makes us poor integrators... Ninety per cent of what we do doesn't add value."

So once you've got people talking about their problems, ask "What are the problems you're running into?" If we're not seeing problems, we have a problem.

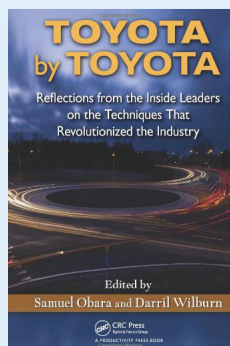
Encourage your manager to get out to the floor and see the three "reals": the real problem, the real facts and the real situation—get them to go to the gemba.

Culture is critical. If you go out onto the floor, you will build a culture of getting problem solving going and getting people engaged. Whenever I bring people in and do development, I tell them they're also responsible for company culture. But being on floor has to count. Taiichi Ohno once said that if you could walk a hundred metres in less than 10 minutes, you weren't doing your job. If it took you a lot more to walk that distance in your factory, you were being an asset to your people!

From the bookshelf...

Toyota by Toyota By Samuel Obara and Darril Willburn (Eds.)

I just love reading about Toyota Senseis. Having worked with the Toyota world for more than 25 years, I can really appreciate the changes that they've had to make from the Socratic style of teaching the Toyota Production System, through to the Toyota Business Practices and other, more modern, methods for training in TPS. This book brings together Toyota leaders in sales, training, marketing, logistics, human resources and manufacturing and provides the basis for them to tell how TPS grew and developed, the challenges they faced and the experiences that really shed light on how well TPS really works.



It's a shame that Taiichi Ohno is no longer with us, but the authors present more than a century of TPS experience and many of them had worked with Ohno. Of particular interest is the fact that most had to learn their lessons about TPS the hard way. As the back cover notes, the authors hope that by sharing their struggles, the readers will avoid having to go through the same pitfalls. There is no magical silver bullet for learning Lean, but this book will take off most of the rough edges. I highly recommend this book for anyone that wants to learn Lean, but particularly for those that will be practising any sort of leadership function.