

## Is your Lean implementation all talk?

By Dr. Timothy D. Hill

A number of organizations have tried to tackle Lean training as an in-house deliverable. Others have contracted with outside trainers. A common shortfall in the do-it-yourself and contract-it-out approaches is the reliance on classroom training over getting out there and doing it.

There is a tendency to spend too much time in the classroom and not enough time going to the *gemba* (the actual place). Classroom or computer-based training might be used, but this emphasis on new technology can hide the fact your Lean implementation is all talk.

Toyota and other Lean leaders do it right: they follow a train-then-do model that emphasizes a rapid training portion that puts enough content in front of people to support their *gemba* activities.

Let's look at two training scenarios. Firstly, the full value stream scenario is a larger-awareness training model and involves having people map out a series of processes, looking to the current and future-state value stream maps and closing performance gaps. The second scenario, getting to the continuous improvement, is more task based. There is no value-stream mapping (VSM), just getting to the continuous improvement as quickly as possible. This is what Toyota does most of the time.

■ **The Full Value Stream:** I have used a train-then-do model consisting of a compressed delivery of an introduction to Lean; problem solving the Toyota way; VSM; and A3. The first two establish the importance of Lean tools and problem solving to get to actionable root causes. The VSM work shows the range of performance gaps that can be ranked and then reviewed for action. The A3 work builds the accountability for the continuous improvement; it is based on a PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) cycle and becomes a miniature performance contract for the continuous improvement activity, and for each activity, an A3 is developed. By making a business case, the continuous improvement becomes owned.

There might be six steps:

1. Introduction to Lean
2. Problem Solving the Toyota Way
3. Current State: Value-Stream Mapping
4. Future State: Value-Stream Mapping
5. A3
6. Deliver Kaizen

■ **Get to the Continuous Improvement:** If the training is geared toward getting people to deploy kaizens right away, we can dispense with some of the leading elements. The problem-solving training goes directly to the A3 delivery and can take people to the *gemba* right away. More often than

not, participants will bring continuous improvement suggestions, which should be subjected to the usual problem-solving searches to determine the correct problem, the correct root cause and the correct countermeasure to eliminate — not just manage — the problem.

1. Problem Solving the Toyota Way
2. A3
3. Deliver Kaizen

In either case, we get to the A3 and deliver the continuous improvement. The A3 is meant to serve as a practical reminder to get the job done. Don't create an A3 for the sake of creating one. We can then add other training elements, specific Lean elements and more.

In some cases I've seen, the A3s were presented as business cases but were so over-thought and over-presented that they were not helpful. In other cases, the A3s were largely absent. The A3, in these cases, was not properly used as a miniature performance contract to quickly resolve a problem and help move to the next one.

Regardless of which training scenario you're looking at, train-then-do rapid training works best — and adding an A3 makes it work better.

- The A3 will allow your people to explore their continuous improvement journey. Let them know that it's OK to start with a partial solution instead of a complete one when they're beginning. They can tackle the first part of a problem and then move on to the rest of the problem.
- The A3 must be built on problem solving training. Train them enough so that they learn that making a mistake is OK. But more than that, training them to solve problems moves the ownership of the problem solving to them.
- Incorporate the *gemba* into the A3. Don't let the classroom be the only place Lean training takes place.
- An A3 emphasizes that the person is the resource. The solution should not be mandated from above.
- The A3 means that the problem solving is intimately tied (by experimentation) to the PDCA cycle. Doing one A3 is like doing an experiment; each one adds to the A3 skills repertoire.

The train-then-do approach shortens the time it takes to get participants to the *gemba* to look at the real problem, at the real location and with real data. Whether you're training for the larger VSM or the more direct approach, get and build commitment with an A3.

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### Questions from the plant floor

**Question:** *How will my value-stream mapping provide me with a large number of improvement opportunities?*

**Answer:** Whether you're doing an enterprise-wide VSM or just one specific area, the VSM will provide a number of improvement opportunities.

• **Get the current state.** Have people from throughout the value stream involved, along with people who are up and down one or two stages. Have them develop a current-state value-stream map. Get consensus on each step in the value stream. Most people will respond with surprise when they see the steps involved. They have become used to seeing the bits and pieces of their work but have lost sight of the number of little tasks that make up their days.

For each task, have participants put down how long that task takes and how much time is value added and how much time is not. If you can, have participants estimate the wait time between tasks. When people don't know, get them to go to *gemba* and get some baseline or average information. This isn't a long task so don't make it one.

• **Get the future state.** Once the current state is defined, have participants redo the VSM by dropping the steps that were to be dropped, including times less the non-value-added times, etc.

• **Get the gaps.** Arrange the gaps in times from largest to smallest.

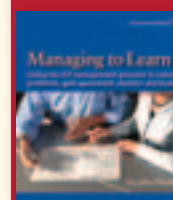
• **Determine which gaps are actionable, addressable and measurable.** Problems that are outside of participant intervention are off the table.

• **For actionable gaps, find the right root cause.** Once it is found, participants can find the right countermeasure. This builds on the problem-solving training they're received.

• **Rank solutions by the potential size of savings.** Start with the largest savings first, subject to ease of delivering the solution. Create A3s for each solution or continuous-improvement effort.

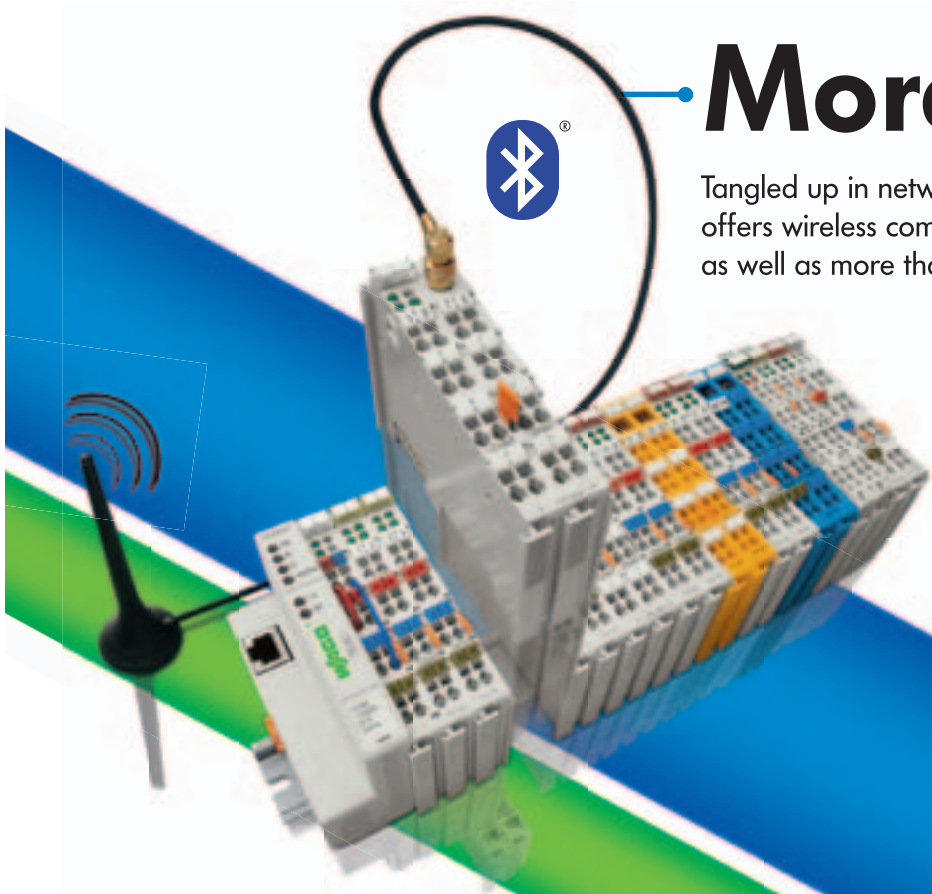
• **Deploy one then move on to the next.** Deploy the first A3 by following through the PDCA cycle. When that continuous improvement effort is done and has become standard work, move on to the next one from the ranked solutions. You'll have enough work to keep people busy. Remember to share successes. Post them on Lean boards. Connect people to the success of your team.

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