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For this edition of “Books to Read & Recommend,” I thought I would review a book that has been around since 2005, yet has proven to be one of the fundamental lean texts in my personal library, especially as it deals specifically with culture and how it must be developed if we are to sustain a lean transformation.

*Creating a Lean Culture: Tools to Sustain Lean Conversions* by David Mann (Productivity Press) does a great job of not only detailing the principal elements of lean management but also how standard work and accountability processes can be established and monitored for all levels of the organization. Mann is an organizational psychologist who had been involved with more than 30 brownfield sites, lean conversion projects at Steelcase. From his experience, he has surmised that the key to sustaining lean conversion is creating a day-to-day management approach focusing on continuous improvement.

Anyone associated with lean is aware of the paramount importance of establishing operator standard work for 100 percent of the activities to be performed during the production process. This is done to ensure that work is completed to customer expectations, will be as efficient as possible, and that the quality of the product will be ensured. Yet, it is surprising to learn that very few organizations clearly establish a lean management process that defines the roles and expected behavior of key management and support staff during their lean journey. A recurring issue surrounding the successful implementation and sustainment of moving from a conventional “batch-and-queue” environment is the alarming failure to “sustain the gains” that approaches almost 50 percent!

Mann is specific in detailing the elements and key characteristics of an effective lean management process. He lists the four elements as establishing the following:

1. Leader standard work: daily checklists and expectations for line leaders, supervisors, and value-stream managers that highlight the importance of and focus on the process rather than product output
2. Visual controls: tools that reflect actual vs. target performance and what must be done during periods of discrepancy
3. Daily accountability process: those meetings at each level of the organization that focus on performance and the follow-up steps that are expected to be completed as assigned
4. Discipline: ensuring adherence to the established process through cross auditing and aligning rewards with consistent performance

The book is just shy of 175 pages and is a very quick read. It contains a great deal of case studies, photo examples, and anecdotes. Highly recommended reading are the chapters discussing the four elements of the management process, establishing standard work for support groups, details of establishing a daily Gemba walk, effective problem solving, expecting rapid improvement, and involving people and suggestions as the cornerstone for continuous improvement.

As you finish the book, another nice surprise is what you will discover in the appendix. It contains not only a “Lean Management Assessment” that quantifiably evaluates an organization in eight areas and charts the results in a “spider graph” diagnostic, but also an 11-page glossary of lean terms and principles. If you are interested in acquiring some concrete explanations and examples as to how you can learn more about making a “culture change impact” on your organization, get hold of a copy of *Creating a Lean Culture*, and you will find yourself highlighting and dog-earring many of the pages for future reference. ■

*Have you read any interesting or thought-provoking books that you might want to recommend? Don't forget to email them to me along with a brief review and I will include them in this column. Email address: mserena@tbmcg.com*



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