



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Lean Learning

Lean learning is about peeling a business down to its basics and refocusing on the organization, using innovation to improve things. Through lean learning, no matter what business they are in, participants realize the existence of parallels between the problems in their business and those in other businesses. It therefore helps participants find solutions to their business problems.

Lean learning dates back to Henry Ford's times, when the Americans had for decades tried to learn to build cars and have a company like Toyota. However, no matter how closely they emulated the technology, they could not measure up.

It wasn't the tools that the emulators made a mistake with; they overlooked the way people think, which is far more important than the tools used.

The Methodology

A training class usually begins with Harvard Business case studies related to work production issues. The idea is to change the way employees think and learn by making participants come up with solutions. Therefore, instructors do not talk much; they act as facilitators in the training session.

Four simple rules are put into the participants' heads for five days. They map the nitty gritty of every job, even analyzing jobs like the mini-assembly lines that make toy jet fighters.

The second day has the participants mapping out all the activities they perform on a factory floor on large white boards. They take a virtual "waste walk" that helps them know where they need to incorporate changes to make their work better. These could be physical or mental. It helps them understand where they stand currently and what they need to do to make their factory work better.

Lean thinking enables participants to understand the importance of well-defined processes, which are generally not followed. Processes help determine what needs to be fixed.