



Why Lean Doesn't Work

by Dave Goebel

Missouri Enterprise

How is it that Lean principles work in some facilities and not in others? Could it be that Lean principles work with certain processes better than others? Or perhaps all that darned technical stuff just doesn't translate into the everyday, shop-floor environment, no matter what the industry.

Actually, neither of these hypotheses is correct.

The main reason that Lean doesn't work is because most applications are local, not systemic. Would-be practitioners utilize the tools without regard for the overall process. Applying the tools to increase the capacity of one process step without considering the capacity of the immediate upstream and downstream steps may not result in a system-wide improvement.

How do we increase our chances for success?

When you have an issue with your car, you don't randomly replace parts hoping that you stumble on the right one. You diagnose the problem and then focus on the appropriate area to increase the likelihood of a successful repair. Similarly, we need to assess the overall condition of the process to identify where to apply Lean tools.

Using Value Stream Mapping, we can create a visual representation of the process providing a high-level view. With an improvement goal in mind, and by gathering performance metrics for each process step, we can assess the capability of each process step to meet the goal. Where we fall short, we determine what changes are necessary to improve the performance of that particular step. In this way, we can modify the process as necessary to achieve the desired results.

Practice in applying Lean tools is absolutely necessary; however, you can get the same experience in applying Lean tools using Value Stream Mapping. This diagnostic tool will increase your chances of achieving systemic, meaningful process improvements that will stick.

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Missouri Enterprise is an organization composed of experienced manufacturing and management professionals. For nearly 30 years, it has helped manufacturing companies meet current challenges while transforming themselves to prepare for success in the next generation and beyond with manufacturing productivity improvements, ISO/quality management systems, and innovative business and growth strategies. Missouri Enterprise manages the Manufacturing Extension Partnership program in Missouri and one of the state's Innovation Centers. For more information, contact Harold Zinn at **314-434-6300**, x1301.



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Experience

- SME Silver Certified Lean Practitioner
 - 30+ years of experience improving manufacturing processes
 - Positions have included Industrial Engineer, Manufacturing Engineer, Manufacturing Engineering Manager, Plant Manager and General Manager
 - Has managed many successful Lean projects at Missouri Enterprise and led many Kaizen events for Missouri manufacturers, leveraging knowledge of Value Stream Mapping, Cellular Technology, 6S, Set-Up Reduction and Total Productive Maintenance
 - Certified Training Within Industry - Job Instruction, Training
 - Certified Innovation Engineering Black Belt
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Education

- MBA, Maryville University
 - Bachelor of Science, Industrial Production and Management, Washington University
 - Associate's Degree, Industrial Engineering Technology, St. Louis Community College
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