

EMPLOYEES: OUR MOST IMPORTANT RESOURCE

Yeah, right. That's why so many manufacturers are cutting back on education, training, conference and other developmental opportunities. We struggle finding the high caliber talent we want, then balk at paying market rates, deny professional organization membership dues, and hope that the candidate's stagnate best can lead the company forward. We all know Einstein's definition of insanity, yet many of us run our businesses as if he's wrong. If you don't think you get your money's worth out of employee development spending, examine the process you execute to maximize its value. In fact, do that regardless. No reason to accept wasting money in the good times.

As a basic process, consider the following: the employee expenditure request must include a statement of expected learnings at the event that will improve decision-making or other elements of performance.

Your resident expert on the topic (if there is one) discusses that expectation with the employee prior to the development event with advice on "things to look for." Upon return, the attendee provides a concise summary of key learnings to the appropriate subgroup of your employees, including a specific recommendation of a related change the company should consider making. Actively share the learnings.

Review how the documented goal was met, keeping records of what was worthwhile and what was not, to help your organization make better development decisions in the future.

That may sound a lot like Plan, Do, Check, Act. It should. PDCA is useful in most processes. Plan the expected gain from development, do the development in a way that emphasizes the targeted gain, check to verify how well the goal was met, and use what you learn in evaluating future development options. If an organization, an employee, or a topic consistently misses the expected result, change what you do. As Einstein pointed out, you won't get better results by just doing more of the same old thing. Or by relying on stale skills and thinking.

AME/SME/SHINGO LEAN CERTIFICATION PROGRAM UPDATE

In February I went to SME headquarters in Dearborn MI to participate in the Bronze certification prep course and take the Bronze exam. I am now preparing my Bronze portfolio for submission.

I will be leading a small group of approved instructors in modifying the current bronze prep course to enhance its value-add. The Bronze prep course is exam preparation, not an "intro to Lean," and that will continue to be the case. We will just make it more teachable and build in better opportunities to connect multiple concepts.

Each level of the certification presumes candidate Lean knowledge and experience. The 150 question exam seemed fair and reasonable (of course I might not think so had I failed!). I have not yet completed the portfolio process, which addresses the experience requirement. I gain familiarity with the lean certification program, including the various levels, I'll keep you posted.