

Our source of new business is referrals from friends and clients. If you know a company – customer, supplier, friend, or your own – that could benefit from improved operations, please email a link to this site or just let us know. Your best interest is our best interest.

The Finish Strong™ monthly e-newsletter is for business leaders who recognize Operations as more than an execution tool. If you value Operations as a strategic function that creates competitive advantage, profitability and brand loyalty to the marketplace this newsletter is for you!

### **THIS ONE, YOU CAN CONTROL**

North American manufacturing has felt the impact of growing competition from low cost countries, regulatory requirements, and now a spreading credit crisis that could easily influence both demand and supply. An additional threat looms for most manufacturers, one that leading organizations are already working to prevent.

How confident are you that the knowledge created by your problem solving activities will remain with your organization when the experts leave?

Problems may have been solved, but has the knowledge gained through the analytical process been converted from the personal knowledge of your experts into organizational knowledge accessible for future use and leverage? How much of your organization's knowledge is "tribal," relying on the unlikely existence of consistent, accurate, and readily available memories?

Baby boomers are reaching retirement age. The average number of years employees stay with the same company is falling. It's time to make sure the knowl-

edge valuable to your organization that those folks have gained doesn't leave with them, and that it is leveraged across your organization now.

Reinventing the wheel is expensive, slow, and totally unnecessary. You can't afford to do it.

### **LEAN SIGMA**

I've never liked the title "Lean Sigma" imbrangled by many companies, but struggled with articulating my objection. We don't call a lean operating philosophy "Lean 5S" or "Lean Kanban," so why incorporate the name of a different tool into the name?

Talking with Jeffrey Liker, author of *The Toyota Way* (and several other great books) last week, it finally hit me. Fundamental to Toyota Production System thinking is 1 X 1 problem solving, i.e., addressing problems as they arise. Six Sigma is batch problem solving. To place the concept of Six Sigma equally along side Lean to indicate commitment to continuous improvement creates an oxymoron. Unfortunately those who do so likely don't realize that.

Six Sigma can be a valuable tool. It simply cannot drive continuous improvement.

### **FINISH STRONG™**

#### *The Starting Pistol*

Alfred North Whitehead:

"The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order."

#### *The Tape*

Rebecca Morgan:

"...and that is the purpose of standardized processes. Without them, chaos or stagnation are more likely descriptors."