

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 send them a link to this site or ask us to call. 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!

## THE LURE OF LOCAL OPTIMIZATION

In the search for the nonexistent but highly appealing silver bullet, it is easy to fall in love with tools. Lean has plenty of tools and entirely too many people in love with them.

The clamor is deafening: “Teach us 5S so our factory can be Lean.” “Teach us SMED so our changeovers will be Lean.” “Teach us Kanban so we are Lean.” And if someone agrees to teach the tools, shortly thereafter is frequently heard, “We tried Lean, but it doesn’t work here.”

Lean is about global optimization, not local. It is about the Redeem Team’s Gold medal in the China Olympics, not the bronze medal brought home from Greece by the star-studded American individuals in matching uniforms. It requires looking at the whole, not just the pieces.

Lean is about seeing and eliminating all waste. To recognize waste requires understanding value as viewed by the customer. It requires challenging all assumptions, especially the unspoken ones no one even thinks about anymore. It requires refusal to accept “this industry is different” as explanation for waste.

Lean is about flow, which by definition includes a global view.

Start with a value stream map, identify non-value-added activities and significant impediments to flow.

Then determine how best to eliminate them. Not all improvements are created equally.

You may end up using 5S, SMED, Kanban and/or any other of Lean’s tools to do so, but you’ll know the goal and how to measure success. Departmental use of tools is not the goal; improving speed, quality, cost, and safety throughout the organization and supply chain is.

## EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE COULD BE COSTLY

Haunting the halls of Congress for almost 2 years now is legislation called the Employee Free Choice Act. Nice sounding name, but a bit misleading. This legislation as currently written would eliminate the secret ballot and NLRB election oversight in determining if a group of employees will be represented by a union. There are several other significant changes, especially around timing of reaching agreement with a new union following an election. Do NOT let this sneak up on you and get passed without your voice being heard.

Regardless of this pending legislation, it makes sense to ensure all employees are aware of the benefits they currently receive. It makes sense to treat employees with respect and to focus on safety. If employees believe and feel that they are well-treated by their employer, why would they choose to give a percentage of their pay to a union? Be a better partner with your employees than a union ever could be. Communicate, communicate, communicate. And then communicate some more.

## FINISH STRONG™

### *The Starting Pistol*

Niccolò Machiavelli:

“...there is nothing more difficult to carry out nor more doubtful of success nor more dangerous to handle than to initiate a new order of things...”

### *The Tape*

Rebecca Morgan:

“ ...except to NOT do so.”