

If you know a company — customer, supplier, friend, or your own — that could benefit from improved operations, let us know.

Your best interest is our best interest.

The Finish Strong® monthly e-newsletter is for business leaders who recognize Operations as a strategic function that creates competitive advantage, profitability and brand loyalty in the marketplace.

These brief articles, list of events, and amended quote will make you think. Go ahead: test us

CAN'T SEE, OR CAN'T ADMIT?

As I work with manufacturers to create Lean Management Systems, I sometimes find that the first level supervisors do not bring problems (What Should Be Happening is not equal to What Is Happening) to the forefront. Because yields are not 100%, on-time delivery is not 100%, performance to schedule is not 100%, and unplanned machine downtime is not 0, I know there are problems. So why aren't they brought up for discussion?

Problems are not a reflection of the supervisor; they are a reflection of the systems and processes in place. The supervisor cannot be expected by himself or by others to solve them alone.

It is sometimes difficult to see problems as something to be driven from the business rather than just the way things are. Unanswered requests for help can easily reinforce the latter perception.

It has to be not only safe, but encouraged, to discuss problems. Taking the time to truly drive repeat problems from the business has to be a priority for management and support resources.

Not all problems are created equal. Priorities for addressing them must be established, communicated, and then executed. Addressing them must include both root cause and Plan-Do-Check-Act/Adjust thinking if they are to truly be eliminated.

Do your supervisors see problems? Are they willing to make them visible to others? Or have we taught them to just accept them as the way things are? We can't fix what we don't know is broken.

CONFLICTING INCENTIVES

We can't be surprised at the current Euro and Eurozone crises. The concept of developing a central currency controlled by a central bank, but spent by almost 20 different countries with no central control, was doomed from the beginning.

The leaders of Greece, Italy, Portugal, and the other countries want to get reelected, and find it difficult to say "no" to the wants of their constituencies. And why should they say "no" when there's no aligned connection between what they spend and the money supply? England showed foresight in sticking with the pound, though it will be impacted by the problems of its surrounding trade partners.

The Eurozone countries will either end up with multiple currencies, or with some form of centralized debt control. Imagine the USA Republicans and Democrats making independent debt and spending decisions.

Do your departmental spending budgets provide any incentive for managers to "trade" authorized spending for the good of the whole? Do you build in poor incentives by basing next year's budget on the current year's actual spending by department? While the budgets authorized at the beginning of the year may reflect best thinking at that time, things change.

While you may not see all the conflicts built into your metrics and budget systems, your managers do. And most of them want to get reelected.

FINISH STRONG®

The Starting Pistol

Michelangelo:

"I am still learning."

The Tape

Rebecca Morgan:

"..and I always will be."

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