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Lean Thoughts

LEAN Customer

Yes a big portion of adopting and implementing Lean Principals is to identify "waste" and eliminate it from within our operations to reduce cost and remain competitive. The other side of Lean is the balance of capacity and capability to match customer demand … but do we really do a good job in this arena?

I would suggest that we could probably do a much better job of integrating our customers into our Value Stream. I think most companies have a fear of speaking to their customers beyond introducing new products, features and attributes of existing products since the customer will be looking for more by paying less. So we sit in our facilities anticipating and guessing about potential customer demand and building an infrastructure to deal with sudden surges and surprises.
A key element of Lean Enterprise is Level Loading or Hyjunkia … to be truly effective this requires intimate customer involvement … but how do we get there?

First categorize your customers and the products they purchase into "Runners, Repeaters and Strangers". We will initially focus on the Runners. The first logical step would be to conduct and extended Enterprise Value Stream Map digging deep into your customer to determine how demand is generated and accumulated before an order is triggered. This may reveal some exciting opportunities since you may be surprised that your customer's ordering methodology is not as sophisticated as you had imagined.

Next, work with your customer to establish the products they order from you on a Kanban system. In past lives I have employed the use of web-cams to view inventory stocking locations to really remove the customer pain of placing orders. By supporting your customer with Kanban you will be able to get closer to the actual customer demand without feeling the effects of an ERP filter.

Link your customer Kanban system with timed delivery milk runs. Once your customer knows when your shipment will be arriving, orders and support systems will be put in place to maximize resources. Based on your analysis you should be able to optimize the cube and size of your trucks and the length of the run. Once you have your outbound route established you can use your backhaul route to pick up supplies from your suppliers or use the route to return reusable packaging.

Internally, at your operation things will begin to optimize as you can anticipate predictable demand. Once you have your "Runners" operating smoothly on a Kanban induced timed delivery route it become fairly easy to integrate Repeaters and ultimately Strangers into your production planning strategy.

You know how to use these simple tools internally … so begin to leverage their power by using them with your customer relieving customer stress and making your customer even more committed to you and your success.

SMART FLOORS

For those not yet committed to a visual factory – stupid floors you just walk on, but smart floors are filled with information that brings order out chaos, as visual indications show where everything should be.

Where Lean Thoughts can become Reality

"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow."

Ronald. E. Osborn

KUNST Solutions Corp.

Richard Kunst
President and CEO
Tel: 519 651 2341 E-mail: rkunst@kunstartofsolutions.com Web: www.kunstartofsolutions.com

Lean Thoughts

The Gender Difference

The following was a blog posting by Delia Treaster

In ergonomics, we design things to fit the workers. This means designing for the workers as they are, not as we would like them to be. In other words, we're not "politically correct." We design for real people, whether they are big or small, fast or slow, tall or short, old or young.

Along that line of thinking, we need to be candid about gender differences. By this, I mean the work-related differences between men and women.

So here are some "rules of thumb" about differences between men and women as they relate to the workplace. These are rough guidelines for back-of-the-envelope calculations. (For more precise calculations, use anthropometry data. Or ask an ergonomist.) As such, they are generalities and yes, of course, there are exceptions to the rule. But generally speaking…

Strength: Men are generally stronger than women. How much stronger? About 1/3 stronger. Or to put it another way, a woman (on average) has approximately 2/3 of the strength of a man. This means it takes three women to do what two men can do, if physical strength is the critical factor.

Size: Men tend to be bigger than women. In the United States, the average man is 6 inches taller than the average woman. This means that a workstation that has been built for men may need to be changed when women start working there. Not only does the height of the work table need to be lowered, but tools should be moved closer because a woman's reach is about 5 percent to 10 percent shorter than a man's. In designing seat widths (as in airplanes) where a comfortable fit is important (notably not in airplanes), shoulder width is the critical dimension for men; but for women, hip width is the critical dimension.

Speech: The average frequency of a man's voice is 128 hertz. The average frequency of a woman's voice is 256 hertz. Women also talk faster than men. On average, females can talk at a rate of 250 words per minute, versus 125 words per minute for typical males.

Sense and Sensitivity: Women are more sensitive to the color red, and they have better visual memory. Men see better in bright light; women see better in the dark. Women have wider peripheral vision because they have more rods and cones in their retinas; they literally see the bigger picture because they receive a wider arc of visual input. Men's visual fields are narrower, but with greater depth and a better sense of perspective. Color blindness is more common in men (8 percent of men) than women (0.5 percent of women).

Women have greater sensitivity to sounds and smells. Age-related hearing loss for men begins around age 32; for women, it begins around age 37. Men have superior visual-spatial skills and are better at reading maps and blueprints. Women have superior verbal skills and can learn foreign languages more easily. Women are more susceptible to pain and swelling of the hands when using electric or vibrating hand tools for long periods of time.

Although this list may ruffle some feathers amongst those aiming for political correctness or trying to avoid stereotypes, here's hoping that it helps you to design better workplaces, ones that fit both men and women. Or as the French would say, "Vive la différence!"

KUNST Solutions Corp.

Richard Kunst
President and CEO
Tel: 519 651 2341 E-mail: rkunst@kunstartofsolutions.com Web: www.kunstartofsolutions.com