



December 15, 2008  
Volume 7, Issue 51

# LEAN THOUGHTS

*Richard Kunst*

Tel: 519 841 0150

E-mail: [rkunst@kunstartofsolutions.com](mailto:rkunst@kunstartofsolutions.com) Web: [www.kunstartofsolutions.com](http://www.kunstartofsolutions.com)

## *Stress, Business & Safety*

With unemployment levels at an all time high and the continued announcements of additional lay-offs, plant closures the stress within our society is also at an all time high. Stress is a huge distraction and removes focus from an individual's mind. So what do we do?

Stress is a distraction to an individual and also to an organization. The stress can result from watching fellow team mates being laid off or even members of your family. While focusing on potential solutions individuals will be distracted from performing their job functions increasing the potential of injury.

Also as a result of cut-backs, lay-off many folks are doing more tasks than they have ever done before. In many cases, insufficient training has been provided or the need to complete several tasks in reduced allocated time again will make folks vulnerable to injury.

The cost to a business of supporting an injured employee while off can be huge, which does not help the economic model of the business. Also there are those employees that knowing their job is at risk may seeking salary protection behind a false injury claim.

So while you may be cutting back in other areas of your business, now is the time to increase your investment in Health & Safety.

**Housekeeping** ... is the foundation. When people get stressed or over-worked they become sloppy. An unorganized workplace is fertile ground for injuries. Reinforce the principals of 5S+1 within your environment. Make sure your 5S it is not just a housekeeping thing but also focuses on ergonomics and reduction of steps employees are required to perform their functions.

**Attendance** is the barometer of moral. A bad attendee is a poor performer. A poor performer creates poor quality. Good quality is what will keep your customers coming back, so by focusing on attendance you will enhance your quality. As the active workforce diminishes a simple casual absence will create huge stress on the balance of the team members tasked to get product completed on time.

Take the time to investigate every casual absence it may just be a symptom of a much larger issue with the employee that if un-discovered could lead to catastrophic consequences to the employee and your business.

**Near Miss Investigation** is a proactive approach to preventing potential injuries. Today doing more with less people is increasing the vulnerability of our folks to get injured. Conducting a near miss investigation not only is a proactive approach it will help make the processes more robust.

**LOTO (lock-out, tag-out)**, to many employees not following the simple rules of LOTO is a short-cut to increase productivity. Just go interview a previously injured employee if by-passing the LOTO program really did save time in the end. There may be less inspectors but these policies were established for good reason. Audit and make sure they are still being followed.

### **LEAN CONSORTIUM MEMBERS:**

- ACE Bakery
- Alumicor
- CGL
- CTS Canada
- EATON Cutler Hammer
- KRAFT
- LA-Z-BOY- Residential
- MESSIER-DOWTY
- MORRISON LAMOTHE
- ORENDA
- NESTLE WATERS CANADA



Where “Lean Thoughts”  
Become Reality



Management can take the following actions, in five broad areas, to help mitigate the after-effects of layoffs on employees who remain.

1. **Communicate, Communicate, Communicate** -- "Most employees want to know what will be happening to them, especially whether they will they be laid off. Secrecy or lack of transparency will just add to their sense of powerlessness. Do not delay in confirming whether there will be job cuts. Communicate why workforce reductions are necessary. Employees will understand if the workforce needs to be reduced as a last resort,"
2. **Allow for an emotional response** -- "Anger, concern, insecurity, and survivor guilt are all perfectly natural emotions for employees to feel," said Klein. "It is crucial for managers to spend time assuring employees that it is OK to feel this way. Otherwise, employees may release these feelings in non-productive ways or situations."
3. **Proactively address the negative effects of less staff for the same work** -- "Increased workloads for employees who survive layoffs are inevitable. Often this has the added effect of negatively impacting teamwork during a time when all have to work together to rethink how tasks are done. But managers can choose to involve their employees in the search for solutions, thus addressing both teamwork and efficiency simultaneously." "For example, gain-sharing and other employee involvement teams offer opportunities for employees to help improve work processes and teamwork while benefitting economically as well."
4. **Demonstrate continuing long-term interest in the careers of the survivors** -- "Following layoffs is a good time to introduce 'stretch assignments' -- those that will expand the skills of survivors and demonstrate your confidence in them. It is also a good time to increase the frequency of discussions about career-related topics, including possible advancement opportunities."
5. **Empirically determine how things are going -- don't just guess.** "Management-by-facts is the best way to gauge how employees are performing after layoffs. CEOs still must report to their external constituencies, including investors, boards of directors, media, and communities in which they do business. Periodic, systematic, employee attitude assessments enable management to ascertain the impact of their actions on the day-to-day operations of the company. Employee attitude surveys also demonstrate to workers that they are still an important asset. Even if budgets have been cut, an efficiently designed employee survey process can provide critical information for management,"

### Leverage Resources !!

*We can be a cost effective extension of your CI Department without adding permanent resources.*



### Problem Solving and Suggestion Programs

*The following is a brief excerpt from a thread transpiring on the NWLean Blog this week*

I like Bill's idea of paying a \$1 for every error found.

You must look at every implemented idea as being very good even if it isn't. You must avoid criticism to not turn people "off." The manager has to learn how to turn around bad ideas and help the worker to make them into good ideas. You do this by asking not telling.

A solved problem might create another problem, great! That is what continuous improvement is all about. Kaizen means change, but change for the better, but when you get better you also find new problems to solve.

Lastly, challenge people to implement one improvement idea per week. I was in Mexico a few weeks ago and one employee, Oscar, has implemented 156 ideas, averaging one idea per day.

Best,

Norman Bodek

*"I believe through learning and application of what you learn, you can solve any problem, overcome any obstacle and achieve any goal that you can set for yourself."*

*—Brian Tracy*