

Adaptability..... The Non-Negotiable Competency

Change is a certainty especially in our volatile economic climate. Consequently, **Adaptability** is increasingly surfacing as a key leadership competency within organizations across all industries. Adaptability is a blend of flexibility and versatility.

Are you adaptable?

Flexibility is the ability to readily modify, respond to, and integrate change with minimal personal resistance. People who are flexible do more than just accept change. Rather, they seek new initiatives and look for ways to improve their roles and the quality of their organization. They manage their reaction to change and recognize reactions in others. Flexible leaders are advocates for change and recognize more than one right way to accomplish something.

Versatility is the ability to manage changing assignments, adapting quickly to changes in priority, focus or approach. People who are versatile embrace a variety of subjects, fields, or skills and turn with ease from one to another. They typically have strong organizational skills and excel at multi-tasking and juggling priorities. Versatile leaders embrace change and enjoy its challenges.

Leaders who are adaptable are in high demand. Flexibility and versatility are non-negotiables in today's business environment. People who are adaptable have the strong capacity to "go with the flow" and experience minimal stress. They trust that change is necessary and they demonstrate flexibility and remain committed to their mission regardless of the new direction or mandate.

Today's work environment requires a high level of optimism and a "can do" orientation. Possessing multiple talents and a willingness to adapt them to changing assignments as required is increasingly a defining characteristic of top performing leaders.

How to develop and demonstrate your adaptability?

- Be mentally flexible
- Respond promptly to shifts in direction, priorities and schedules
- Maintain your productivity during transitions...keep your emotions in check
- Plan carefully for any change you initiate
- Don't just manage change.....embrace it
- Serve as a model for the attitudes and behaviours expected as a result of a successful change
- Be open to new ideas....your own and others

-Lisa Tromba

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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

Lean Heightens Safety

The following article appeared in the March issue of "Lean Directions" the Lean e-newsletter of the SME www.sme.org

For companies contemplating the pros and cons of a lean transformation, questions beyond reducing non-value-added activities are often raised. For example, management consultant [R. Michael Donovan](#) was recently asked during a Lean Thinking seminar if lean manufacturing may have a negative effect on employee safety.

"Not at all," said Donovan, who maintains the exact opposite is true. That is, lean creates safer working conditions.

"The thought that lean manufacturing compromises safety is an unfounded argument I've heard before," said Donovan. "Lean manufacturing is not only compatible with safety, but over the years experience has demonstrated that becoming lean is an absolute prerequisite to achieving the safest work environments possible. Actually, unsafe working conditions and accidents are the antithesis of lean and the ultimate waste."

Jack Rink, lean consultant and lean training specialist, says it's non-lean work environments that pose safety risks because of their haphazardly designed work processes. "Poorly designed work processes mean that error proofing and standard work are impossible with untrained people doing work differently when they feel like it," says Rink. "Messy, unorganized work areas mean that 5S principles have not been applied, and accidents are everywhere just waiting to happen. Lean manufacturing creates much safer conditions. People need to understand that safety is an essential and integral part of becoming truly lean. Above all, unsafe is not lean."

Steve Engelman, a lean six sigma consultant with R. Michael Donovan & Co., Inc., adds, "Work areas designed for lean manufacturing utilizing 5S principles, ergonomics, error-proofing and standard work will allow for the effective application of total productive maintenance (TPM). With the proper application of lean tools, safety is designed into the process, which is constantly monitored for conditions that could become operational problems."

The bottom line when it comes to worker safety and the lean culture, according the experts, is this: Lean manufacturing techniques, when properly applied, go a long way toward ensuring safe working conditions, especially as compared to outdated conventional manufacturing methods.

Why Implement Lean in the Front Office

- Avoid re-dos on the factory floor
- Eliminate excessive handoffs, returns, and duplicate work
- Integrate technology more effectively
- Reduce contract and document processing time
- Improve order to cash processing flow and accuracy
- Improve customer lead-time
- Improve communications across departments and minimize conflicts
- Free up people to do strategic and proactive work
- Make individual and departmental responsibilities crystal clear
- Create a more focused and profitable organization