

# Lean Thoughts

## COMPRESSION THINKING

Lean Thinking invaded the Western hemisphere during the late 70's and early 80's. It started as a manufacturing thing and the early proponents that were able to embrace and absorb lean Thinking within their organization were able to distance themselves from their competitors.

Although many organizations are still becoming aware of Lean Thinking and the benefits it can bring ... The term "Lean" has crept into the everyday lexicon of business excellence. With so many organizations embracing Lean is it still the strategic differentiator for business or just a survival tool? I argue that Lean has become the common place tool and organizations need to look for further advancements in organizational thinking to push the envelope of competitiveness.

Early in the 80's Robert "Doc" Hall was a founding Pioneer of the Association of Manufacturing Excellence (AME). Initially, the AME was truly a grass-roots organization fueled by passion to stimulate excellence within operations through practitioner exchanges, workshops and conferences. AME has truly been successful in spreading the word ... But now with thousands attending the conferences annually does it still continue to provide insights as a strategic differentiator?

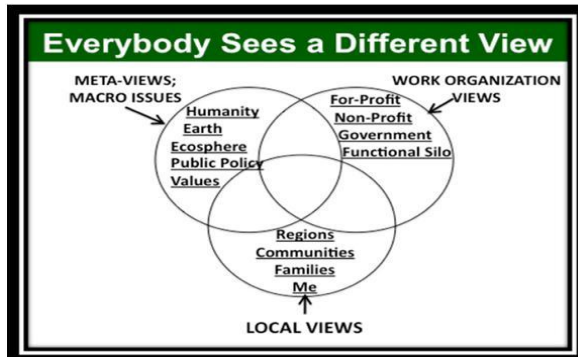
Life is changing and we are beginning to see the effects which is going to require a change in thinking starting now. As the Baby boom generation enters retirement and as technology exponentially improves annually, speed becomes the greater currency.

Re-enter Doc Hall to stimulate new thinking called "Compression" ... Still very much a work in progress it does make sense ...

I encourage you to spend some time exploring the compression web-site and even join the on-line forum <http://www.compression.org>

Compression differs substantially from conventional thinking. Great difficulty is expected applying it, so we invite practical thinkers to join in this movement. Once you are into the "smash up" of ideas aggregated in Compression, please contribute your own thinking. All posts are now classified in one thread, but if it starts to build in volume, we could sub-divide into many topic categories. However, we'd like posts to reference a broad view, even when they make a detailed point; it's tough to avoid splintering into camps. We are very interested in ideas for:

- How to convey the thinking — few words can adequately express some ideas.
- Extensions of the thinking.
- Current evidence of Compression.
- How to apply Compression in specific companies or work organizations — examples.
- Reports of experiments in which you have participated



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

## COMPRESSION THINKING

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*Compression*, the book, merely primes Compression Thinking. It's not a fixed body of knowledge, so contribute to it yourself. Tune into how nature is actually working, not as we wish or hope, and to how it keeps changing. Look at what human organizations physically do today, not in some bygone era. Suspend belief in old explanations framing how things must be, and dig for credible sources. Unfortunately, none of us can see the whole picture with our own eyes.

We are near a turning point, the end of expansion as we have known it. Population is expanding on an earth with finite resources. Old thinking from the industrial revolution presumes that we can continue growing indefinitely, that more resources can always be found – somewhere — and that having more and using more is a sign of success.

Today both public and private economic discourse is guided by financial thinking. Those into lean thinking break from that a little. They remove from work processes waste that can be seen directly, not as represented by costs. Compression thinking has to step beyond this. Physical actions and their consequences must take priority over financial motivations.

How this ends is up to us. What do we have to do to deal with Compression?

Conceptual basics are well-known, but practice is slow to take hold. First, eliminate waste, things that add no value to anyone. Then conserve (reuse, repair, remanufacture, recycle and so on) and contain (hazardous material). Many individuals want to decrease their resource footprints, but until working organizations create practical systems they can use, their effect is minimal.

Compression begs for fundamentally new economic thinking — Compression Thinking. Its challenges are interrelated. Conditions will always be changing. Even the best organizations have barely started. Some do a little, but claim a lot, opening themselves to charges of “greenwash.” Much more imagination is needed. Our biggest challenge, always, is us.

So start to look behind financial facades to see the physical reality of what we do. Then dream of what can be done.

### Compression Thinking– What’s Different?

1. It takes a working organization’s operational view. Don’t view “environmental interests” as dooming the status quo with no way out. What do working organizations really have to do? Where do they start?
2. Adopt global-scope system thinking, or process thinking. Thinking of just my company ducks the challenges.
3. Compression Thinking does not hinge on environmentalists’ touchstones – Bruntland definitions, etc. Environmental concerns are only one reason to make systemic changes. Increasing complexity of much work today calls for a different mindset.
4. Technological advances with the same business thinking are insufficient. The system will keep undoing itself. Working organizations have to be guided pragmatically, but scientifically. We even need pragmatic ways to eliminate the waste from our own behavior at work.
5. We have to move beyond the case for change — why — and get on with what and how, blending innovation from many sources. .
6. Finally we need to think of these challenges positively. They are very difficult, but mankind has met big challenges before