

Lean Implementation Expertise: Where Intellectual Intelligence is Insufficient

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While in-depth knowledge of Lean concepts and tools is critical, absence of strong emotional and spiritual proficiencies will produce implementation failures. Too often in the equipping of leaders to address process improvement efforts, such as Lean, is the training limited to the intellectual competence aspect with a dose of team coaching. The focus on the IQ (intellectual intelligence) aspect of Lean by learning the methodology is insufficient by itself.

In addition to the IQ gained in expanding technical expertise, focused EQ (emotional intelligence) is required due to working with teams and organizations as well as SQ (spiritual intelligence), which addresses the leader's drive and purpose in undertaking such work. While implementation training has begun to recognize emotional intelligence, it is also needed to work productively with others. Frequently it is limited to team building techniques. The opportunity is to go deeper with individuals to uncover prevailing mindsets and strengthen purpose-driven behaviors. To accomplish this deeper inquiry, a leader must have a keen sense of their purpose, vision and values prior to engagement . . . a degree of spiritual intelligence or SQ.

A Personal Journey

Joining Procter & Gamble as a manufacturing engineer after graduation, I was ready to learn something beyond theories and equations. Curious about how businesses, organizations and product supply systems really worked, my energies soared with the absorption of available insights. Given this tremendous opportunity to work for a leading edge company, I took full advantage of learning the current best approaches to this work. There was so much I did not know.

Unexpectedly, over many years of working within various product supply systems, some of the learnings had to be un-learned. The changes within manufacturing since the 1970s have been huge. I would be a little embarrassed to share certain beliefs held on processes, inventories, machine maintenance, system measures, the role of quality and scheduling. But with understandings gained from reading, experimentation and discovery, my conventional thinking was challenged when production systems soared in performance. As leaders, we were reading and learning more about theory of constraints (Eli Goldratt's books *The Goal* and *The Race*), TQM (Kaoru Ishikawa's *What is Total Quality Control*), TPM (Seiichi Nakajima's *Total Productive Maintenance*), Kaizen (Masaaki Imai's *Kaizen*), Lean (Taiichi Ohno's *Toyota Production System*), six sigma and a host of other methodologies. I discovered continual learning was a way of life, indeed a survival requirement. Intellectual growth was important, but I observed that some of

the smartest people in regards to the new methodologies did not always have successfully implemented projects. And a key learning along the way . . . *knowing about new methods did not necessarily equate to successful implementation.*

When leading such improvement projects, I discovered that making the case for the worthwhileness of the change competed with the existing culture. No matter much time was spent in explaining the technical underpinnings or the value of the change, a culture of resistance was held fast by a foundation of mindsets and beliefs. A cultural transformation was required to employ the full creative energies of the people being asked to change the processes. At the heart of this needed transformation was leadership . . . me.

Emotional Intelligence

Yes, the product supply systems known today have radically changed from when I entered the workforce having been fueled by new intellectual concepts. But a key element for successful implementation has been the steady drumbeat of the transformation to high performance work systems. The basic supervision course I took when beginning my journey in manufacturing was far undersized for the job at hand. Work systems were evolving from command and control, to parentalism, to adult-to-adult and then finally to purpose driven contributors. Again, I was required to grow with regard to interpersonal skills. My emotional intelligence, EQ, needed to expand.

As work systems developed, increased value was being placed on emotional intelligence, the ability to work productively with others. At the time, we did not use the term emotional intelligence, but the notions were present. Daniel Goleman coined “emotional intelligence” in his 1995 book by this title, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*ⁱ. Now the term, as represented by EQ (emotional quotient-measurement approach), is used to describe a broad array of skills and characteristics best used in leadership.

But looking a little deeper, I discovered the foundation of EQ was about having such an interest and respect for the people I worked with that the connections developed beyond transactional relationships. Getting to know people at a more meaningful level opened up relationships . . . understanding what was important to them, what mindsets they used, what they thought, what spurred their energies and what gave them purpose. When people became more conscious and willing to examine these bigger questions, the culture became unstuck and was ready to move forward.

This approach fits what is currently known about cultural transformation. As found in Figure 1, desired behaviors were the target. Indeed, new behaviors were needed to implement new ideas that would radically change the workplace. But efforts to change behaviors failed when

the focus was limited to instructing new practices or structures/policies. New language alone (especially Japanese terms) was not the way forward.

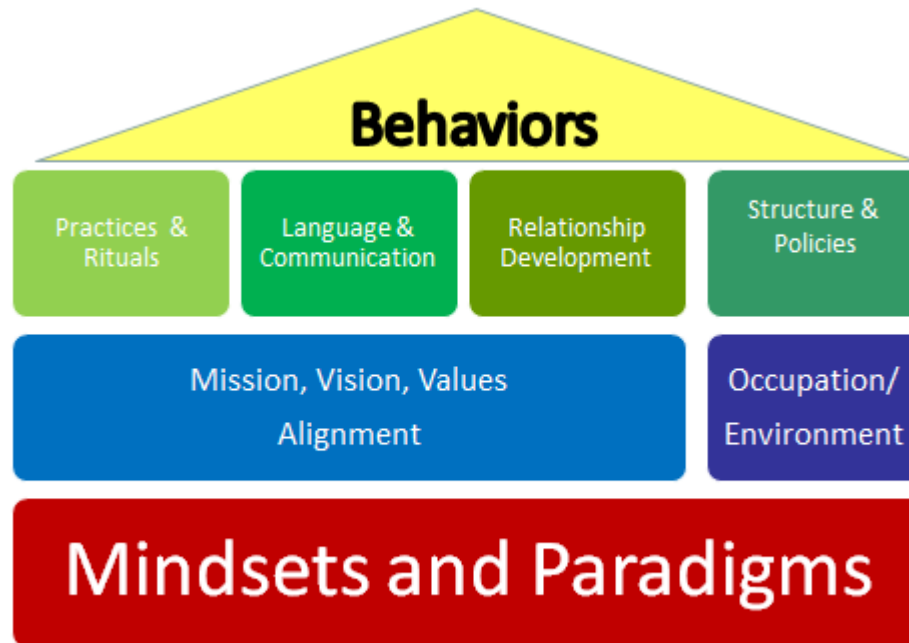


Figure 1ⁱⁱ

Instead, working at the lower levels proved much more valuable. Working with people in building consciousness of their mental models, their mindsets and their purpose/vision/values produced discernable growth. The culture became fluid, retaining the desired positive aspects while adopting new behaviors. Most importantly, creative energies were unleashed. Not in everyone, but within a critical mass.

Spiritual Intelligence

But here was the catch. Going deep with people spurred self reflections. What was my purpose of choosing this vocation, my vision and values? Certainly I had considered these as I traveled along a life path, but these beliefs were short of a solid foundation. Taking an early step in capturing my purpose, vision and values in writing was difficult. Reviewing, reframing and being accountable to a chosen life plan were even more demanding in the beginning. This is fundamental work of spiritual intelligence, or SQ.

Danah Zohar introduced the term spiritual intelligence, or SQ, in 1997 in her book, *ReWiring the Corporate Brain*ⁱⁱⁱ. SQ was a clever approach to have the aspect of spiritual development to be considered alongside of IQ and EQ. Others have joined into the SQ inquiry and its measurement. Spiritual intelligence speaks not to a religious doctrine (the practice of a

spiritual belief) but to spiritual aptitude. The concept of spiritual development includes a keen self-awareness, living into purpose and vision, alignment of a vocation with purpose, viewing life challenges and adversity within the context of spiritual growth and alertness to larger patterns and connections.

Back to the tough work of improvement project implementation such as Lean, as the hard work unfolded I found more reliance upon my EQ and SQ capacity. Better understanding the work as the orchestration of a collective vision proved vital for the overcoming of obstacles. I learned having the intellectual knowledge of Bruce Tuckman's *forming-storming-norming-performing* model was a far cry from making performance a reality. A high level of self-awareness of all participants was a condition for success in difficult times in the building of an effective community. And this self-awareness, this SQ aptitude, needed to present in me as the leader.

Of course Lean has moved beyond the manufacturing world. I remember first seeing Lean applied to an office setting in one of our plants in Japan. Working cross-cultural projects opened up even more experiences. Experiencing application of Lean principles and methodologies in entire global supply chains, healthcare, education and governmental sectors has expanded my appreciation of the same. Yet, when the actual methodology is isolated, it is still about change leadership. Becoming a better, more effective leader has been at the heart of my efforts over time regardless of the setting . . . in the corporate world, education, volunteer service or consulting.

In Summary

My journey is far from unique. Prior to the coining of the terms IQ, EQ and SQ, many leaders have gained wisdom in implementation of workplace improvement projects. But being conscious of these three areas of development (IQ, EQ, SQ) may help in rapid leadership growth. Being more competent as a leader, especially in these times of accelerated change and increased complexity, calls for such consciousness. Intellectual knowledge is important. But without emotional and spiritual intelligence, implementation failures will remain a mystery.

Esprit de Corps (team spirit) is the outcome of skilled leaders and conscious contributors. As the leader, creating a strong foundation of meaning will be instrumental in building such teams. Start by asking questions of deep meaning, and write down your answers.

Key Questions in Building Spiritual Intelligence

- Where does my drive, my passion come from? Why am I here on earth . . . for what purpose?
- What is my life's vision, and how does this current work fit?
- What are my 1-3 key values? How can I operationalize them in the current setting?
- What enlivens me? What am I excited about creating?
- When do I move to fear in my actions and thinking versus embracing challenges?
- Why is the current improvement project I'm leading matter . . . really matter?

ⁱ Goleman, Daniel; *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*; Bantam Publisher, 2005.

ⁱⁱ Hacker, Stephen; Leading Cultural Transformation; *Journal for Quality & Participation*; January 2015

ⁱⁱⁱ Zohar, Danah; *ReWiring the Corporate Brain: Using the New Science to Rethink How We Structure and Lead Organizations*; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1997.