

**White Paper**

# ***Lean Success Factors: 10 Lessons from Lean***

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## ***Lean Success Factors: 10 Lessons from Lean***

Jim Womack and Dan Jones, in the forward to Learning to See and in their book Lean Thinking, have succinctly defined a formula to start the lean transformation. This methodology is effective and proven.

- Find a change agent (how about you?)
- Find a sensei – a teacher whose learning you can borrow
- Seize (or create) a crisis to motivate action across your firm
- Map the entire value stream for all your product families
- Pick something important and get started removing waste quickly <sup>1</sup>

Why is it then that fewer than 20% of companies who embark on the lean journey succeed at their efforts and can truly be said to be “Lean Thinkers” five years later?

The reason is simple. A great start does not make a great finish. To finish well, a company needs to transform their culture. Paying attention to these 10 lessons will maximize your opportunity to finish well.

### ***1. Motivated Management: Without demand from top management, lean efforts will fail***

It isn't enough for the management team to support the lean initiative; they must demand success and demonstrate repeatedly that there will be no tolerance for lackluster performance. This motivation must come from the top, because in most cases middle managers do not have the influence to change the culture.

*A Case from my files:* A few months after commencement of a lean deployment at a plant which provides products for the home parcel delivery industry, it was becoming obvious that the lean effort was already stagnating. We had done everything per the formula laid out by Womack and Jones, but still progress was faltering. The normal excuses were rampant; our business is too complex, engineering isn't supporting the effort, poor suppliers, terrible maintenance, and so on.

In a weekly review with the CEO, I told him of my concerns and of our lackluster performance. Fortunately, he is a man

of action. During the following day's work session with the facility's management team, everything changed. The meeting began in typical fashion, but then the CEO turned to the plant manager, pointed at him with both hands and said “The success or failure of this project is your responsibility, and if it fails, you will be gone from this company.” Pointing to the support staff in the meeting with us, he continued “If any of these people fails to support you, let me know, and they'll be gone”. He didn't have to say it twice, everyone understood.

Without motivated management, lean efforts will fail. Too often the commitment is half-hearted and everyone knows that there will be no real consequences. The demand maker need not be the CEO or President. If you are the plant manager, you can be the demand maker for your facility.