

BY THE BOOK

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Lean for the long term

Specs

Lean for the Long Term: Sustainment is a Myth, Transformation Is Reality by William H. Baker Jr. and Kenneth Rolfes (Productivity Press, New York)

Synopsis

The book defines lean as a comprehensive business model and not just a set of tools in a toolbox. The authors have seen the lean transformation derailed and lose its momentum due to a tools-only focus. They also found that in many cases, lean is viewed as a “project” executed by a manufacturing manager or continuous improvement leader, but it does not have full-time support and involvement by upper management. They demonstrate that for the long term, “a lean transformation is, in reality, a different management system.” To accomplish this, management must change the focus from sub-optimizing separate technologies, assets and vertical departments to optimizing the flow of products and services through entire value streams that flow horizontally across technologies, assets and departments to customers.

In Chapter 1, they discuss the fact that becoming lean requires use of the common language of business to be able to communicate. What gets management’s attention are sales, cash flow, margins, profits and profitable growth; and it should be everybody’s business. The lean

practitioner needs to converse in the language of business. The authors dedicate a chapter to what the board should know about lean and how using the lean culture, the CEO’s goals can be achieved, no matter their prior experience.

They found that many lean practitioners are doing “lean stuff” rather than helping the company to develop a dynamic lean business model and lean culture. It is not about doing lean, it is about living lean.

In Chapter 3, there is a self-evaluation provided for companies to rate their lean enablers that build the culture and a discussion of the top 10 contributors to a lean transformation failure with steps to overcome them. Successful companies, including Autoliv, Ford, Hillenbrand and Toyota, that have maintained their focus for 30 to 35 years have adopted a lean management system (LMS) to drive company strategy and tactics. The book defines an LMS as consisting of five key

elements: clarity of purpose, standard work, transparency, accountability and innovation. They saw from numerous assessments that most continuous improvement initiatives focus too much on implementing a particular checklist of tools and processes, rather than on execution of the business

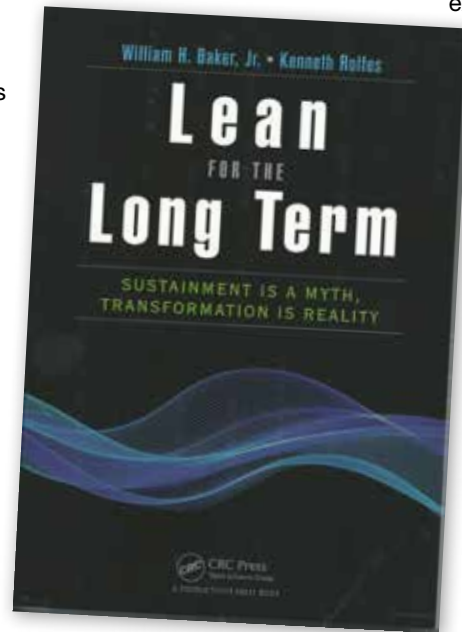
model. So they state that if we want lean to survive in the long term, we must look at lean as a management system and not a program or a bunch of tools.

The book covers what a lean practitioner needs to know from the perspective of the CEO with details from their perspective. Also, Chapter 9 pulls it all together to outline how to develop a plan to include key drivers, the business model transformation and infrastructure to develop the culture and

how to interface with the board of directors so they appreciate the great value of a lean strategy from top to bottom.

Worth the read?

The ingredients for long term gains and continuous improvement are presented in a readable, understandable way. This book will open the eyes of many to understand that lean is a strategy that should be maximized by involving everyone in the lean journey in all business processes. The financial benefits of lean are presented with many charts and graphs to reuse to help convince people only focused on the short term. The three audiences are all addressed: lean practitioners, management and the board of directors. In fact, a checklist is provided for each group at the end of the book to provide guidance. ●



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