

Creating Alignment with the Leadership Team Part 1

By Harold Chapman

CLEAR DIRECTION

Can you imagine with me for a moment a boat at sea. The boat has all of the horsepower it needs and three times the fuel it needs to get to its destination. However, the rudder is broken. Although this ship has the fuel and horsepower necessary to get it to the destination, it will spin around in the ocean and eventually run out of fuel and never get to its final destination. This is analogous to many teams we encounter these days. These teams have enough people, those people are even energized, but they lack clear direction based on principles.

We must ask ourselves, “How is our rudder? How do we ensure clear direction?” To ensure we have clear direction, we must first ensure that everyone on the team has the same understanding about the organization’s definition of “success.” Our mindsets are governed by the current paradigms that we use to make decisions each day. These paradigms are developed over the span of our entire lives. We would prefer to run our businesses based on principles versus paradigms. Principles are universally applicable and will ensure that all of us are aligned. The first paradigm I would like to address is the paradigm of Lean (aka Operational Excellence, Kaizen, etc...). Lean IS NOT “Less Employees Are Needed.” What, then, is LEAN? Lean is...

A system to identify problems and to solve problems utilizing all of one’s people.

DEFINING TERMS

Now, in order to truly understand Lean, one must understand the definition of some terms:

- Problem = A deviation from the standard
- Standard = A challenging target condition that cannot always be met (so continuous improvement is a part of the Lean thought process). A standard could be defined by the cultural, organizational, or technical work.
- The work may reside in the...
 - Manufacturing Value Stream (flows from raw material to finished goods)
 - Design Value Stream (flows from concept to launch)
 - Business Value Stream (flows from order to cash)



PRINCIPLES

Once we have alignment around the definition of what Lean IS, then we must develop alignment around a common set of principles. Having a common understanding of these principles will allow the team to make better decisions going forward. If we want to be a continuously improving, world-class, excellent organization, we need to ensure the continuous, universal application of beliefs (behaviors and thinking). We must also be willing to continually address change, responsiveness, and the organization's ability to improve and adapt to its competitive environment. In order to accomplish this, we must create some principles that are the constancy of that universal application. There are seven major principles that we must understand to ensure this alignment:

- Long-term Vision
- Customer Intimacy
- Embracing the Total System
- Process Centered
- Obsession for Quality
- Learning Organization
- Respect for People

Stay tuned for next month's newsletter when we begin explaining each of the seven principles mentioned above. Does your team share the same definition of Lean? Is everyone working from the same set of principles? If you answered NO to either of these questions, Drive, Inc. can help. We have experienced professionals who can lead coach your team through the process of gaining alignment. For a no-obligation introduction meeting, please contact Paul Eakle at paul.eakle@driveinc.com or 865-323-3491.

