There Is Always Room For Improvement

An interesting thing took place today, when during a discussion a team leader, he said that everything was being done perfectly in his area. Where is there any area where there is no room for improvement anymore?

We all want to be absolutely perfect and, it's something that will *never* happen. If you think you have achieved perfection, then you are probably further away from it than you know. Not having a problem is a problem.

A core focus of lean manufacturing is *continuous improvement.* You can't be a good lean organization if you aren't improving, so the job is never done. I don't believe I will ever be on a team where things are so good, and improvement isn't needed anymore.

In fact, some of the best teams I've ever been on are teams that have issues, and have made great efforts to improve their performance. A successful team is one that is always improving.

I'd maybe propose that excellent Lean Manufacturing execution is when the team is able to resolve issues quickly and effectively, not at a time where you think there are no problems to be dealt with – this is not a realistic objective, and not achievable in many ways. You must recognize that Improvement can always use improvement as well:

Do your teams quickly recognize that there is a problem?

A good effective team is one that is always looking for ways to improve their performance and eliminate waste in the process.

Do your teams effectively determine the Real Root Cause?

A good example is if you go to the doctor for an infection. Would you rather be treated for the temperature that you are running as a result of the infection or would you want to be treated for the condition that is causing the infection? It is the same thing when a team is making improvements – is the root cause of the problem known or is it just the symptoms? Identifying the root cause of an issue can be very difficult and coming up with a solution that puts the issue or issues to bed permanently is also very difficult. You must go further in understanding the problem and root cause if you are truly going to resolve the issue for good and not just addressing the easiest and quickest solution.

Does your team only address problems?

In many instances, teams in a manufacturing environment will spend the majority of their time working on identifying problems in their area. If you are making a change it does not necessarily have to tackle a problem. You can make a change to a previous

problem that you may have worked on to make it even better than the original resolution. There may have been an improvement in the tools available to the team or the team may have some different ideas and may want to experiment with different resolutions. If the change proves to be unsuccessful, go back to the baseline process or standard.

So the next time you think your manufacturing area is perfect, always ask yourself again: "What can we do to further improve?|