



December 2014 - Issue #106

Welcome from Lisa

I just got back from a week in AZ, visiting with my family and helping my parents and relatives with odd jobs. I helped my aunt buy a car, and she is now driving a new Mazda 3 and calls stressed out every time a new light illuminates; however, she is happy to be in her new car.

I also made a trip to the dump to get rid of boxes and other stuff, and so I am now familiar with navigating scales, backing up into the dump (which the guy asked me if I was able to do which seemed a little offensive; however, if it was my Mom, I'd be glad he asked) and the like. I was the only car in lines of pick up trucks... I also was the catalyst who plugged in the vacuum in my parents' room that caused their power to go out and require an electrician to resolve - much to my dad's chagrin since he has two blankets and a space heater around to stay warm. And the adventures continue....

Now I'm back to work and thinking about 2015. First, I hope you have a Happy New Year! Next, on to thinking about work....I am going to spend some focused time thinking about 2015 strategy - are you?



Instead of resolutions, my recommendation is to think about where to focus your attention in 2015. Don't pick 18 things; instead, just choose 3. You'll thrive.

IN THE NEWS

Please check out my latest speeches, articles & quotes:

- Featured in ***tED Magazine's*** article "*Navigating the Widening Skills Gap*" - check it out!
- Interviewed by Kevin Eikenberry on how to achieve project management success. Unfortunately they had a technical glitch, and so if you didn't catch it live, it is unavailable. I hoped to provide it to my loyal readers gratis and so stay tuned for something even better...
- Featured in the UK's *Learning People* in an article, "*There is a Skills Gap in the Workplace Says Lisa Anderson*".
- Published "*Avoiding Top Project Pitfalls*" in *Project Times*.

I am also proud that I have been selected to be on a panel discussion about the Amazon Effect at the Inland Empire *Manufacturers' Summit* on February 19.

Last but not least, my colleague Dr. Kash Gokli, head of Harvey Mudd's manufacturing practice and I are hosting and facilitating a Harvey Mudd executive roundtable discussion on the skills gap and the critical importance of talent on January 22nd. If you are an executive in the Southern California area and interested in joining us for an engaging discussion, please [email me](#).

Enjoy,
Lisa

Email
LMA Consulting Group, Inc.

P.S. Please think of me if you should know anyone who would like to connect business objectives with results.

The Systems Pragmatist

6 Process & Systems Trends for Success

As the year rapidly comes to a close, it seems an opportune time to discuss systems and process trends. I find that those clients that pay attention to trends and find opportunities to leverage them often surpass their competition.

I'm working with a diverse portfolio of manufacturers and distributors ranging from \$6 million dollar, family-owned businesses to \$100 million dollar facilities of multi-billion dollar, global companies. When I see trends that cross company-size, geography, position etc., I take note. If you can apply the "right" best practice to the "right" situation at the "right" time with the "right" people, you can dramatically increase the value of the business.



Several of the latest process and systems trends that pop to mind include:

1. The value of common sense processes: A few months ago, I wrote an article on uncommon common sense, and I have to say that my most successful clients by a long shot are those that employ common sense best practice processes. This does NOT necessarily mean they are lean gurus, Six Sigma black belts, systems gurus or even Harvard grads. Instead, my best clients involve their people, listen for ideas, leverage collaborative relationships and utilize what makes sense.

For example, I've had several clients with unsung heroes working in their midst. One planner could turn straw into gold in terms of optimizing operations, inventory levels and service levels but was largely overlooked because she didn't "talk the talk". Another client had a data ninja who was a superstar in developing common sense best practices in leveraging data for management decision-making but he was not fully appreciated. Another had a transportation wizard hidden in the background because he didn't "talk the talk". In each of these situations and countless more, I have helped my clients achieve significant goals by finding these already-existing stars and asking for common sense processes that will be effective.

2. Simple process visuals: Again, I often find my clients and contacts getting carried away with the latest and greatest processing mapping techniques. Of course, these can often times be useful; however, what really brings results is simplified process mapping and process visuals. In essence, break the process into manageable chunks and steps. Make it understandable to the masses. You'll be surprised what you find when you simplify and clarify. For example, one of my clients told me earlier today about a great success she had in operations efficiency by shortening the production line so that she could "see" the process gaps. Simplicity works.

3. Excellence in project management: Undoubtedly, those clients who are expert in project management succeed. The best plan with poor execution will fail whereas a mediocre plan with exceptional execution will likely succeed. I don't see this as a conflict with lean concepts. To me, Kaizen events just bring the right parties together to focus time to understand processes, review gaps, brainstorm improvements and implement whatever is achievable within the Kaizen window. Actually we could go back to point one - uncommon common sense! As one lean guru told me, the ideal Kaizen is set

up to be a chunk which can be fully completed during the event. With that said, the same types of project management skills are needed - period.

4. Business intelligence: The value of rapidly sifting through mounds of data, finding the right data and analyzing the data so that information is available for strategy setting and decision-making is becoming cornerstone to success. Those clients with a data ninja should hang on to him/her for dear life! It is not as easy as it looks to achieve; however, there are tools available to make it more achievable.

Many ERP systems have business intelligence type tools with drill down capabilities. If you have an ancient system, there are always options available to add-on or simply utilizing Microsoft Access can be sufficient. One of the data ninjas I worked with in my career prior to consulting was a MASTER wizard with Microsoft Access and data. This article reminds me of several fun people I've worked with over the years....one of my first clients was a huge trade association that wanted to select the right business intelligence software to support their business and customer base. There is power in leveraging data!

5. e-commerce: E-commerce has become an assumption. In almost every ERP and systems selection project I partner with clients to complete, e-commerce is an expectation. If it is not an immediate requirement, it is a "must-have" in terms of business growth. Manufacturers and distributors are having to either compete with Amazon or are having to live up to Amazon-like expectations whether or not Amazon will ever become a competitor. According to my research study on the *Amazon Effect*, building out technology infrastructure including tools such as e-commerce is key to meeting customers' expectations.

6. Leverage smart technology: In essence, everyone should NOT use the same technology. Since I help clients identify and leverage systems and technology to support their business growth and to elevate business performance, I often run across a common theme when it comes to leveraging technology - a race to the fads! Instead of worrying about keeping up with your neighbor or competitor and use the same latest and greatest technology or system they use, take a step back and determine what would help your company achieve its strategy or strengthen its competitive advantage. You'll spend a whole LOT less yet you'll be FAR more effective.

Pay attention to trends for opportunities to grow your business, become more efficient, increase margins and the like. I'm launching a new service, the Profit Chain Accelerator Program to identify and leverage these types of opportunities. [Email me](#) for more information.

Did you like this article? Continue reading on this topic:
[7 Hot ERP Systems Trends](#)

Profit through People

It Begins and Ends with Leadership

As a tribute to my HR mentor who recently retired after a long and successful career in organizational development and HR (congrats Debra), I have to tip my hat (if I wore hats) to her for being 100% correct - success begins and ends with leadership.

Undoubtedly, my successful clients can have mediocre strategies, plans and even people; however, if they have great leaders, I guarantee they will be more successful than the reverse. The most talented and dedicated employees will become frustrated and leave if saddled with lousy leaders. Some might stay if particularly loyal; however, they will eventually "give up" temporarily - until a new leader arrives.

To the exceptional leaders out there, THANK YOU! It is much appreciated. I heard about one of these leaders tonight from a former colleague at a key client. She said this leader is so respected that if he said, "trust me" even if his plan didn't seem solid, everyone would follow - without exception. Even as a VP, she mentioned the value he created by seeing his employees as valuable assets, regardless of position. He would talk with "the little people" and see how they were doing and ask for ideas. Not

surprisingly, they will follow him but not the current leaders who seem to care solely about their personal career paths.

Did you like this article? [Continue reading on this topic: Leadership Qualities](#)

Eagle Eye

Looking for Opportunities for the New Year

It seems like a good idea to look for opportunities to grow your business, elevate your business performance and/or dramatically increase the value of your business, right? Of course! Yet the question remains: How?



I've found that identifying opportunities can be quite simple yet is rarely done. It requires a few key traits: 1) The power of observation - do you notice what is going on around you? Do you notice changes? Are your employees moping around one minute and energetic again the next week? What changed? 2) The right priorities - you are most likely working hard, but are you wasting effort? I find that this is a common problem. Take a step back to make sure you are working on the correct items. Are they the ones that will help you achieve your strategy? Are they urgent and have a significant return on investment? Or are they related to who is shouting the loudest? 3) Spotting trends - are you tracking key performance indicators? Which metrics will tell you if you are making progress? Who knew it would be so hard just to make sure you are making progress on items that will "move the needle" in the right direction on your main objectives! I find that my clients often times are progressing but they might be expending a lot of effort to barely move the needle at all on the final metric. It isn't tragic but you must identify the issue and adjust immediately!

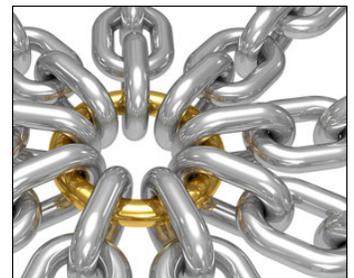
What can you do to improve these three key traits? The more proficient you become, the more of an eagle eye you will develop.

Did you like this article? [Continue reading on this topic: What is Eagle Eye Strategic Focus?](#)

The Strongest Link in Your Supply Chain

Cycle Counting Remains Core to Success

I've started working with one of my clients on a cycle count program, and so I'm reminded of the critical importance of this supply chain fundamental. If you cannot find the right inventory in the right place at the right time, your customer will be negatively affected. This should be a sufficient reason to pay attention if you'd like to grow - or even maintain your customer base; however, it will also impact your profitability and cash flow if you need additional incentive.



Cycle counting is a measurement process; however, cycle counting alone will do NOTHING to fix your inventory accuracy issues. Count and adjust; count and adjust. If there is no root cause analysis, it becomes a vicious cycle with zero accomplished. Instead, you must focus on process disciplines. Does your company value process disciplines? Do NOT think about what is said. Instead, answer this question: If the employee responsible for work order transactions is near the end of the day and a machine breaks down, will you divert him/her from transactions (even if there is no backup) to help fix the machine? How

about if you are being questioned by Finance about overtime and your resource already has worked "too much" overtime? Will you send him/her home and tell them to complete another task and finish the transactions tomorrow? What message does that send?

Did you like this article? Continue reading on this topic:
[Cycle Counting](#)

Connections

Connections and relationships are the 80/20 of success!

THIS MONTH'S REQUESTS:

- Join my APICS Inland Empire's CSCP (certified supply chain professional) class starting on January 10th IF you are interested in building your end-to-end supply chain skills. Find out more and register [here](#).
- My Ontario ProVisors group of trusted advisors is looking for an labor attorney, a real estate attorney and a commercial real estate broker. Please [email me](#) with your referrals.
- An excellent Supply Chain Manager with expertise in inventory management, systems, business processes, and project management with a specialty in aerospace in the Wichita area is looking for her next career opportunity. Please contact [her](#) with referrals and ideas.
- My colleague Dr. Kash Gokli, head of the manufacturing practice at Harvey Mudd and I are hosting an executive roundtable discussion on the skills gap and the critical importance of talent. If you are an executive in the Inland Empire, San Gabriel Valley, north Orange County or surrounding area and interested in engaging discussions with peers, please [contact me](#).



NOTE: To submit an item for this section, please send me an email with a short description of your needs and an email address. Please note that NOT all requests will be published as it must fit the guidelines and align with the Profit through People brand.

What is Profit through People?

I've used the Profit through People brand since my newsletter's inception in 2006 as it resonated with me. Although I consult on topics within each of my service lines--Eagle Eye Strategic Focus, The Strongest Link in Your Supply Chain, the Systems Pragmatist & Profit through People--I find that people are key to success in every situation. If you are interested in elevating your business performance, please [contact us](#).



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