



July 2014 - Issue #101

Welcome from Lisa

I am amazed as to how fast the year is flying by. Perhaps it's a sign of getting older... I just got back from a trip to DC with my brothers and nephew. Thanks to my Mom, we had a private tour of the capital building - very interesting! Of course we saw all the major sites while walking endlessly in hot and humid weather but there is only one DC. We also took a train for the day to NY (and so scrambled from end to end seeing what was feasible in a day). The picture below is of me in front of the 911 memorial.



It's important that we all get away to refresh or at least experience a change scenery - and spend time with family and friends. It helps with work as well - how can you think of new ideas when putting out fires all day with no time to think?

In addition to taking time to think, I find those who provide stand-out-in-the-crowd customer service make the days a bit better and are very likely to gain repeat customers for life. My feature story is about my recent experiences with these types of people!

IN THE NEWS

Please check out my latest speeches, articles & quotes:

- Quoted in *American Welding Online's "Help Wanted Part 4: Who's to Blame for the Skills Gap?"* and *SAC's "Continued Adoption of New Technologies by Consumers and Businesses Has Ongoing Effect on Businesses"*.
- Published "*Developing a Strategic Plan for Long-Term Sustainability*" in *Business Edge* and "*How Do We Gain Executive Commitment?*" in *Project Times*.
- Lastly, I am very excited that I've been selected to speak at *APICS 2014* on "*Skills gap: Empower Yourself & Employees for Success*" in New Orleans on October 19th. Look under Professional Development.

Speaking of DC, my Aunt Cheryl who lived there for many years is celebrating her 70th birthday this month (amazingly since she looks 40!) - Happy Birthday! And also a happy birthday to my Aunt Therese, Ryan and Liz.

Enjoy,
Lisa

Email
LMA Consulting Group, Inc.

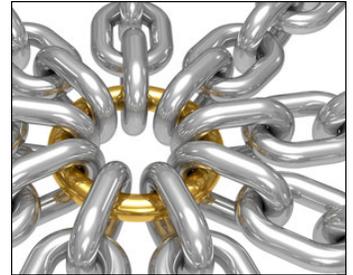
P.S. Please think of me if you should know anyone who would like to connect business objectives with results.

The Strongest Link in Your Supply Chain

Repeat Customers Come Back for Service

Repeat customers come back for service. In today's world, quality must be an assumption; thus, the key is to stand out in the crowd with service.

A recent example pops to mind. I was driving on the 57 south (freeway in Los Angeles) in the fast lane on my way to a client to lead a Kaizen workshop, and my car broke down. For those of you who don't know, I love my car - a maroon Chrysler Sebring convertible. I have 235,000 miles on it and am going for 300,000. It has a year-old refurbished engine, and I have planned to use it as long as possible as I am just not too excited about any of the cars available for purchase today. In L.A., you spend a LOT of time in the car so you better love it.



The good news is that I was in stop-and-go traffic - who knew there would be an advantage to stop-and-go traffic! While talking on my blue tooth, I stopped for the car ahead of me, and just so happened to look down and thought, "I think my car isn't on." I tried to re-start the car - many times to no avail. I got off the phone and put my emergency flashers on. People started going around me in the shoulder next to the fast lane. Of course, it just so happens to be the day I forgot my license and credit cards on my desk at home but I had my AAA card. I called and they were very reassuring as they put an expedite on the service since I was stuck in the fast lane. They also said they'd call the highway patrol and offered to stay on the phone with me until one of them got there. I didn't take him up on it but I could see the value of that if I was panicked. I know something like that would be really beneficial for my Mom as she doesn't even like to drive in the first place, let alone get stuck in a dangerous spot.

Next I called George, the owner of the Shell station who I've known and used since 1995. I knew he probably wouldn't be in yet; however, the mechanics who work for him would probably be there. One of them answered. He was alarmed and started asking questions to make sure a tow truck was on its way etc. One other time, I borrowed my friend's car, and it broke down on the freeway (you know how luck goes sometimes), and they sent someone ASAP to get me. He said they would jump on it as soon as I got there, and they'd see what cars they have available for me to drive.

Unfortunately, the stop-and-go traffic started to speed up. A few more minutes went by, and a car who just passed by stopped and pulled off to the side. He backed up directly INTO all the people going around me on the shoulder and didn't stop until he was parallel with my car. He got out of the car and came over to talk with me. He asked me to put my car in neutral and said he'd push me to the side which is what he did. I thanked him, and he took off. A good Samaritan!

A few minutes later, the tow truck arrived - quicker than the CHP which proves that AAA takes stranded people seriously. He took me and my car to my mechanic. Of course, the mechanic who answered the phone got in and turned the ignition, and it started. What?!?! Of course they still had to keep it to figure out what the issue was.

He was quite concerned because George always lends me a car (and many times, his personal car) but they had just sold all their cars, and George was in an all-day meeting. They would arrange for a good rate with Enterprise and take me there; however, I knew that would take a while, and I was going to be late for my meeting. Thus, they offered to take me to the house because I thought I could borrow my good friend's car which was at the train station.

George called while we were on the way to the house. He said he would make sure I had a loaner in the next day or two and would look into the car. When we got there, I looked around and couldn't find the keys, and so I called Ryan (my friend's son) to ask him where they were. He was at work but I caught him on a break, and so he answered. He said, "Yes, they are in my car." Great spot for them: -); however, I was just happy he knew where they were. So, the mechanic drove me to Ryan's work so that

I could get the keys, and then he drove me to the train station to retrieve the car. I took off and managed to be less than an hour late to the Kaizen, thanks to the exceptional service of my mechanic.

Who do you think I'll call next time I am stuck? AAA and George of course! They made a trying situation relatively easy and non-stressful. How are you treating your customers? Are you merely friendly or do you go the extra mile to make sure their needs are met and they'll become a customer for life? I find this is true in manufacturing and distribution just as much as it is true in our personal lives. Take a step back and take stock as to whether you are going the extra mile for your customers? It doesn't have to cost money; you just need to pay attention to what would add value. In my car situation, offering to stay on the phone (AAA) and a little gas and time (to drive me around) cost barely anything; however, it made a HUGE difference to my experience.

One of the reasons I got the Premier membership with AAA was so that if I had an issue, I could tow my car 200 miles if need be to George's station. I know many of their customers feel the same as they are busy with cars everywhere on their lot when the competition is available and waiting for customers. Are your customers willing to wait or pay more for your value-add?

P.S. I still do not know what is wrong with my car; however, they were able to repeat the problem. They've taken it to the engine folks they coordinated with for my new engine so we'll see.....

Did you like this article? [Continue reading on this topic: Creating a Customer Service Edge](#)

The Systems Pragmatist Data Mining for Dummies

As I've been putting together a SIOP (Sales, Inventory and Operations Planning) executive meeting presentation, it made me think about data mining. In this case, there is very little information available - in comparison to other clients, the ability to retrieve information is in the bottom 20% yet I was still able to put it together. Thus, it made me think about a few tips:



1. **Base reports:** So long as the company uses a system, there will be some data you can access. Even the worst case scenarios which make the ERP experts shudder have untapped information. Find it.
2. **Manual information:** I've yet to go into a client who didn't track some sort of information. True, it is often too much of the wrong information; however, they are tracking something. Find those people and understand what they track.
3. **Accounting:** Again, every company has to have financials. Thus, worst case, start with the Accounting team. They might be leery to provide it but if you involve them in the process, you'll likely be successful.
4. **Track it yourself:** To get ballpark estimates for some metrics, you can take a sampling approach and go out and track it yourself.
5. **Report writer:** Every system (even the most fundamental and surprisingly inexpensive ones I've seen for smaller companies) have some sort of report writer or the capability to integrate with a report writer such as Crystal Reports. Pursue this path!
6. **Hire IT experts:** I've seen countless times where folks who are good to retrieving data can gleam information even from the worst systems. At one client, they called him the "Data Ninja". I loved that term as I've run into data ninjas at many clients (although I have to agree, he was the best!), and those who don't have one can bring on a temporary Access expert or SQL expert etc.

Did you like this article? [Continue reading on this topic: What is a Systems Pragmatist?](#)

What Sort of People Culture Do You Need for Lean?

It just so happens I've been working closely with a few lean gurus in the last 6 months, and I've been partnering with clients to implement lean processes, stemming from traditional operations to critical administrative functions such as order management and planning. None of these efforts will achieve anything if they aren't backed by the "right" people culture. A few items to think about if you are going down this path:

1. Culture of innovation - Contrary to how most companies operate, a lean culture dictates that mistakes are good. In essence, if you don't try anything new, you won't make a mistake. Thus, you have to allow folks to try and fail (even when it affects your bottom line) - and encourage it!

2. Bottom up - The people at the bottom of the pyramid are the most powerful. Executives and management are there to provide support, tools, mentoring etc.; however, the people who will make or break lean's success are the people doing the work.

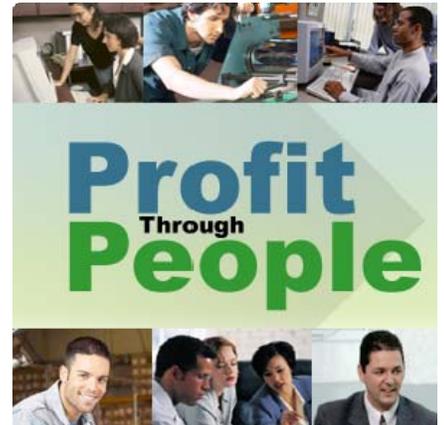
3. Involvement - Of course, you must involve the people. This is not a cursory meeting to update folks; instead, it means you have to be willing to do something you think might not be as perfect as you'd like in order to take their input into account. Are you willing to do that?

4. Education - You must invest in your people and their education. Bring in lean experts to teach your folks to fish instead of catching it for them.

5. Metrics - Many companies fail when they say they support lean but their metrics dictate the opposite. Make sure what you say and what you do are in sync.

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

[Lean: Uncommon Common Sense](#)



Rapid Assessments for Success

I will be rolling out a new diagram/ graphic next month that depicts how my service lines "work together" to dramatically improve performance. In the interim, I thought I'd talk about the first step which is rapid assessments that deliver success. A few tips include:

- 1. Take a cross-functional view** - Only assessments which cross functional lines will provide significant value as no function works alone.
- 2. Look for connections** - It is where the various functions, systems, processes, and people cross that is essential. Focus on these areas.
- 3. Focus only on those areas impacting the critical objectives** - Too many assessments take forever and end up in binders covered in dust on your desk. Throw that thinking out and go for the practical - what really matters to your organization?
- 4. Consider priorities** - How are you determining which items are most important? Take a step back and think about whether it is 1) urgent. 2) significant in impact 3) getting better, worse or staying the same on a daily basis



5. **Keep best practices & fundamentals in mind** - An easy way to rapidly size-up where to focus is to think about the current state vs. fundamentals for the type of business vs. best practices. When all is said and done, where do you come out?
6. **Capabilities** - the best plans are useless if the team is incapable of understanding the plan or how to execute it. Incorporate your capabilities and provide recommendations to fill gaps.

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

Connections

Connections and relationships are the 80/20 of success!

THIS MONTH'S REQUESTS:

- My APICS Inland Empire Chapter is looking for thought provoking speakers, tours and panelists for our Nov 8th symposium. Please email with recommendations.
- My Ontario ProVisors group of trusted advisors is looking for attorneys. If you know of a top notch attorney in the IE (especially an employment law attorney), please refer them to me.
- My APICS chapter has a jobs board so if you want a job or need to fill a job that relates to supply chain and operations management, please take a look.



CONNECTION SPOTLIGHT - GEORGE RIZK

This month, I'm featuring Geore Rizk. If you want to know about why to call George, read my feature article "Repeat Customers Come Back for Service." It is probably all that needs to be said. You can reach George at JR Shell in LaVerne, CA at 909-593-7015.

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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