Can Control Points add Value in Lean?

Guest was Jamie Flinchbaugh,
co-founder and partner of the Lean Learning Center

Related Podcast:

Can Control Points add Value in Lean?

Jamie Flinchbaugh is a co-founder and partner of the Lean Learning Center in Novi, Mich., and brings successful and varied experiences of Lean transformation as a leader, practitioner and facilitator. Under Jamie's leadership, the Lean Learning Center has become in just four years one of the most recognized and premier Lean providers in the world. The Lean Learning Center's clients include Harley-Davidson, Land O Lakes, Intel, Simmons Foods, ZF and Guidant including their Industry Week's Best Plant winner among many other world-class companies.

Before the Lean Learning Center, Jamie was part of the development, training and implementation of the Chrysler Operating System, a widely-benchmarked Lean change program spearheaded by Lean Learning Center partner Dennis Pawley. Jamie was also with DTE Energy as a Lean thought leader to help build the first Lean program in the utility and to transform operations and leadership of the utility industry towards a philosophy of Lean.

Jamie is a frequent writer and speaker on Lean and continuous improvement. Articles include the popular *Beyond Lean*, *The Extraordinary Vision of Henry Ford*, *Transforming How We Work* and others for various industry magazines. He has also written a training video called *Learning Lean Through Simulation* released by SME (The Society of Manufacturing Engineers) and is co-author of the best-selling book *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Lean: Lessons from the Road*. He currently contributes a monthly column to Assembly Magazine titled *Leading Lean*.

Joe Dager: Welcome everyone. This is Joe Dager, the host of the business901 Podcast. With me, today is Jamie Flinchbaugh, who is the co-founder and partner at the Lean Learning Center in Novi, Michigan. He is one of the foremost experts on Lean and his blog can be found at jamieflinchbaugh.com, which happens to be one of my favorite blogs. Jamie, I would like to welcome to podcast and tell me what you have been up to recently.

Jamie Flinchbaugh: Thanks Joe. I'm glad to be here. I still spend most of my time coaching change agents, coaching executives on application of Lean in their own work, or in the organizations work, certainly travel a lot to do that, and working with clients and everything from retail to healthcare, and in between. So, that's how we spend most of the time, and I spend a good amount of time doing education of various types.

Joe: You contribute to a monthly column to the Assembly Magazine, and I think it is titled "Leading Lean" and you touched on a particular point of mind that grabbed my interest on control points. Could you tell me a little bit what prompted the article?

Jamie: Well a Control Point is a form of standard work for management that is often unappreciated and not very well understood. What prompted it was really was just my coaching that kind of draw lots of my inspiration from what I'm seeing in my coaching, and I certainly saw and I see a lot of people struggling with how they really get a pools of higher up organizations opera and how they know our problems. They should be working on particularly at least attempting to work proactively instead of in fire fight mode.

Joe: Let’s first define what a control point is?

Jamie: A control point is one of those touch points you have in the organization that helps give you understanding of how things are going. I like to compare this to sort of your own personal health because it's an easy example to understand. We can certainly react and wait for disease to hit, wait for the triple bypass surgery, and wait for something bad to happen. The control point side would be measuring your way, may be monitoring your exercise program, monitoring your health, your blood pressure, monitoring your cholesterol and those are the control points because they're essentially predictive points in your own personal life of future problems.

Control points of those things in your organization that help tell you that you might have a problem boiling up. You might have a problem down the road, and you want to find out about those things earlier rather than later.

Joe: How is a control point different from a dashboard?

Jamie: Well I think the main difference; I think dashboards are a type of control points. So, control points can be coming in a wide set of varieties. For example, if you have a Badge reader at your front door and if someone's badge is not active they cannot get in the door. That is a form of a control point. It's very automatic one meaning that you're essentially controlling and predicting whether or not the wrong people get in the building, which helps you with security and lots of property and all sorts of other things. Measurements and dashboards are a form of a control point. However, most people especially what's on their dashboard a lot of it is rear view mirror looking.

It might be yesterday, but it's still rear view mirror meaning it's telling us what is already happening. It's a form of a control point, but it often isn't as predictive as it needs to be. I think the other thing that I think distinguishes just a metric and just a dashboard from the control point is also defining the response to it and lot of people under-appreciate that even with the matrix.

They put matrix up because they're interesting, but they don't really defined well. How would we respond if this went the wrong way and that's an equally important part of the control point is really knowing well when this goes south what do we do? What is the response to that piece of information?

Control points can be visual checks. They can be investigations. They can be conversations. They can be matrix. So, I would say dashboard is a type of a control point, but it's often not as predictive as some of the other forums would be.

Joe: An oversimplification may be that it would be a control point within the manufacturer facility that might be a Kanban card?

Jamie: A Kanban card and perhaps also the review of the Kanban numbers, right. Are we running out? Are we still starting the system that might be something we want to be checking to see if our...are we losing cards or is the system not operating or do we have the wrong calculations? Examples of manufacturing, for example, would be safety glass check. You walk through the operation eyes; did this as a supervisor long time ago is walking through; look at each pair of eyes to make sure everybody is wearing their personal protective equipment. Most organizations don't really do that until there is a problem.

When somebody gets hurt, then you go and reinforce the safety gear. If you're doing proactive checks and well say, I need to do it weekly, or I need to do it monthly; it's going to make sure that your system is operating as it should be.

Another example would be standard work. For organizations that use standard work as a way to create, let us say, manufacturing environment a predictable and robust outcome of the task, most people only check if people are actually using the standard work after defect is created.

We have a defect. It means somebody might not have been following your standard work. Let us go flush out, not at the whole thing, is supposed to be doing weekly checks to say, is the standard work store still working for you? Is something wrong with it? Or just you do not understand it and doing that before the problems actually occur.

Joe: It may be a higher level control point. I have seen using supply chain is where they have the red, yellow, green monitors at the end with the green being the top, yellow in the middle, and red or they even sometimes have four levels or whatever, but as that fluctuates they can manage that control point much better in the process. They keep that in front of them to be able to see that. Is that a more sophisticated type of a control point?

Jamie: It's as well, and this is the way I see companies do. As long as you're also defining how you respond, and that's where you really get into the high agreement of how we do manage the operation. It's how do we respond to certain conditions. So, red, green, yellow as an example of really any dashboard or any matrix, what often I see is everybody knows what green means. It means we're OK. No further action required. Everybody knows what red means. We have a problem, and some counter investigation and counter measures are required, but nobody else knows what yellow means. Yellow is ambiguity.

I think about the traffic light you actually pull up to. So, everybody knows what red means stop. Green means go. Yellow, there is a wide range of behaviors, and it leads to all sorts of problems.

Joe: Step on the gas.

Jamie: Yes.

Jamie: Step on the gas and braking look for the cops and then blast through. The behavior is wide and varied, and the same thing is true with matrix around yellow. I always ask people if it's yellow, what do you do? If I get no response or 15 different responses, I know that it's not necessarily good control point yet because we're not really defining either what questions we should be asking or what actions we should take when it reaches that point. That's what it should really do. We should have high agreement about what the control point is and how we respond based on where it's telling us.

Joe: I think that's a great answer because what do you do, and that's the part that everybody questions and it's left for interpretation on how you react to that intermediate situation and I always had this saying: There is only 10 percent of the world that's black and 10 percent of the world is white and then rest of the time the other 80 percent we're living in is grey. So that yellow is probably the world they live in and the part that has the biggest question mark.

Jamie: It's not being rigorous in saying this is automatically what you do, but at least it should force: are we going to do an investigation or are we going to ask further questions? Or are we going to increase the sample size? So, sometimes yellow is just like we might have a problem. Let's increase the frequency of checks so that we find it going towards a red before it's too late. But again, a lot of people use yellow as a...well, I'm pretty busy. Yellow means that we don't need to do anything else because I really can't afford to do anything else, or sure I have no reds up there. Yellow can mean; I will go take a look.

It becomes a safety valve when, in fact, it really means something very specific and that's the same of any control point is what you know? What is the response when you see somebody without safety glasses? What is the response when you see someone not following the standard work? It's just not enough to know that there is a gap. It's enough. It's important to know to what the effect of the response is?

Joe: You talk about using standard work and control points in management. I thought it was for line people that are part of a process out in the shop.

Jamie: A lot of people confuse standard work from standard work instructions. Standard work instructions are often that's often the shop use of saying, OK, do step one, step two, step three, and step four. It applies in the office as well but only for certain things. If you want to say, "Issue a credit back to the customer on their next invoice," there is probably a step-by-step procedure for that. But standard work is anything that you're building some stability, some consistency, and really enough of a stable platform in which to experiment and improve. Check lists can be standard work. Routines can be standard work. These are the things that we want to pay attention to.

It doesn't necessarily say step one, step two, but it provides some consistency and some collective knowledge around what are we trying to pay attention to in an organization and essentially articulates the organizations knowledge of cause versus effect because control points should be the causes. Are we paying attention to the causes before we see the effect?

Joe: Can you kind give me an example of a standard work procedure in management?

Jamie: Let me kind of even back up in providing some contexts for that. As an example, if you take a look at aviation and we're not going through the whole story about the B17 bomber and how check out pre-flight and flight check lists came into being. In aviation, the uses of check lists are a way to allow the pilot to apply their knowledge and skill effectively and consistently. Whether they are tired, whether they are in a rush and whether they have a bunch of other things going on. It's a job aid. I couldn't take pre-flight check list and grab the yoke and start to fly.

It's not a replacement of knowledge, and it's not inflexible, but it is a tool to help a pilot apply what they know about what they should check around their flight, their flight plan, and their aircraft consistently and effectively.

It's a big difference of standard work as knowledge versus standard work as an aid to knowledge and check lists in aviation are examples of aids to knowledge, not replacement of knowledge. As a result of check lists I know Captain Sullenberger from the Hudson water landing, he has been talking about this around aviation safety record, and it really is a phenomenal safety record.

We still have some problems, but it's the phenomenal safety record. Standard work in aviation is a big reason why that exists, and you really see a lot of it. If it's non mechanical, a lot of times when there is a problem because someone took a short cut. Standard work and management could be as simple as every time I have a one-on-one with one of my direct reports.

Here are five questions that I always want to be asking. I might always want to ask them in order. I may ask 15 additional questions, but I always want to make sure I'm asking these five questions because they give me the core knowledge that I need to build my relationship and my work with my direct report on.

Again that's not the form of rigid standard work instructions. Ask this, if it is response A, then go left. It's just a job aid. When used that way as an aid to skill and knowledge, that's an effective use of standard work in management practice.

Joe: If I have a salesman that had five questions to measure the pulse of where he was at with a customer that he completed after a sales call each time, we all would pretty much have an idea since that is a regular procedure of what he meant even if it was a chart on one to 10. What his feeling was about the customers, where our value proposition was, where our service capabilities were, what we'd be able to do. If he had that and sent that in that would be a piece of standard work for the salesman.

Jamie: Absolutely. A lot of times, we swing the pendulum in sales between let everybody wing it and having sales scripts. Sales scripts often are far too rigid and winging it means that we have no capability to learn or share or grow as an organization. So, having job aids that kind of say: these are the 10 questions that we really think are the most effective. You may have to start in the middle and work your way back. You may have to skip over a couple because they just don't seem relevant. It's not a rigid. It's an aid. That's really what is important. A good sales person will have this anyway. The only difference is they probably have it in their head.

A good sales person will know which questions really get to the heart of the matter. Which questions give me good answers and good responses and a good sales person will experiment with that. Well, say if I ask you this way, I get a narrow response. If I get this one, I will get the response I'm looking for.

A good sales person will constantly be experimenting with their set of questions and their spiel as well around what they find most effective. So, they have standard work. It's just usually in their head. I think the only difference here is, do we have the ability to share some of that knowledge as it's build throughout a sales team or sales organization?

Joe: If you had these four, these five questions for standard work, could that trigger the next action?

Jamie: Absolutely. Control point is just a form of standard work, but they're looking for where there are early indications of problems and so in a lot of cases, they should trigger no action or they should trigger some predefined action. I may find the control point, and there might be an issue, and that spins my entire day out of control, but it's still perhaps more proactive than waiting for the numbers to go south, which is really how a lot of our problems are found.

Joe: Or someone else finds them for us, a customer!

Jamie: Wait until our customer tells us there's a problem. That's the worst way to find out of all.

Joe: Now, can these things be set up to be automatic? We kind of briefly discussed that a little bit, but are they all automated or are they all manual? Is there just a big mix to them?

Jamie: It's a big mix. I think about it in terms of two dimensions. You could even draw a grid, a two x two grid around this. On one axis is how manual versus how automatic that control point is, and on the other axis is it backward looking or is it forward looking? So, is it predictive or is it essentially reactive to something that's already occurred? You're going to have across that grid all sorts of different control points.

For example, going back to what I had indicated earlier. Having a portal or having a badge reader that essentially prevents people from coming in the building that don't belong, that's both automatic and forward looking, basically trying to get out in front of the problem of the wrong people being in the building and trying to prevent theft of either physical material or intellectual property.

It's an automatic. I don't have to go through the building and checking people's badges and checking to see if they belong there. Basically, that check is done every time they walk through the door.

Meanwhile, often a daily operations meeting is also a form of a control point. It's much more manual. We're usually going through some metrics. A lot of times those metrics are about what's happened in the past 24 hours or the past week. So, it's kind of in the other far quadrant. It's backward looking and very manual.

Control points, now there's two different parts to this. Control points fit all over that grid. They can be metrics; they can be automated systems they can be all sorts of investigations. Control point standardization really then is what really fits into forward looking but manual checks.

Things where we do need to go looking for potential problems, so that's really what makes them manual but often in a forward looking way. Checking to see if people are actually using their standard work and if their standard work is helping them or hurting them that's in advance of problems being created. It's forward looking, but it is a very manual check.

Control points exist at many different dimensions of the organization. Control point standardization is just standard work for what we need to do as managers in the manual but proactive forward looking category.

Joe: Control points are a central part of management then?

Jamie: It really is. I mean, a lot of organizations, really, I mean they already have control points. Every organization has control points. I think by understanding those two axis of manual versus automatic, forward looking versus backward looking, we can understand them as a suite, or as a package of control points. And, often people look at them as isolated things.

They see this management review as one way, and they see walking about the floor as something different, and they see this measurement as something completely different. They don't really look at is as this is how we know what's going on in the organization.

What happens is that we often end up with a ton of redundancy. We end up with checking the same thing 15 different ways, which is really just bureaucratic waste of resources, lots of over processing there. So, that's one sort of failure mode.

The other major failure mode is that we, you know, if we actually put all of them up on that chart, on that grid, we'd find that we have far too few forward looking or proactive control points, far too many of them are reactive or after the fact.

Joe: Well, that's why I would be afraid of it. It would be kind of micro managing with all these control points out there.

Jamie: The goal is actually, in many cases; I would say reduce the number of control points but make them more effective. What we often find is that we'll have, let's say we want to make sure, let's take a manufacturing environment, we want to make sure that the lines are running. The supervisor is checking that, once an hour, the area manager is checking that once an hour, the factory manager is checking that once an hour. That's just wrong; that's an absolute waste of resources.

What should that look like? Well, it really should look like the supervisor checking it once an hour. If it's down for a certain period of time, then they let their area manager know. If it's down for another period of time, then they let the plant manager know.

It shouldn't be everybody going to look for problems because they don't trust that other people are looking for problems because that's where a lot of the waste is today.

We'll see a plant manager checking something every 15 minutes that the supervisor is checking once a day. Well, there's a disconnect around alignment and what the priorities are in those cases.

I think in a lot of cases the goal of control point standardization is to get better alignment, so we actually simplify and reduce the amount of work that paying attention to performance looks like. If we define what the proper response is, then we don't have everybody running around trying to find problems just because they don't trust that somebody will know what to do when they find one.

It comes down to how do I trust people. If I don't know how they're going to respond when they see a problem, I can’t. This defines what do I do when I see a problem so then we can start to trust the system and the people that are using it.

Joe: What I think of when you're talking there is the redundancy that we have because of automation today.

Jamie: We've made measurement in data so cheap and so easy that we assume everybody should be looking at it all the time, and they should look at all of it. That's not it at all. In fact, we really should be, you know, we've gotten to the point where we've gotten information rich but often, I'll say, wisdom poor, in wisdom being how do I know what to do? One of my examples is if you're driving home from work, what would you rather have, a spreadsheet that shows you every car and their speed and location, or knowing when the car in front of you puts on their brakes?

I mean, at some level I can get a boatload of data, but what do I need to know? I need to know when to put on my brakes. I need to know when the car in front of me does the same thing. That information doesn't even come to me as data; it just comes to me as an on/off switch, a very binary signal.

In a lot of cases we've made information so accessible, but we haven't figured out what to do with it. What we have is everybody checking everything all the time. That's just a waste of resources.

Joe: I think does that not go back to really defining what is really valuable to you or valuable to your customer?

Jamie: It is. It really comes down to understanding cause and effect. I mean, what are the things that, what are the causes in our operation, in our system, that affect the performance of that system? I want to pay attention to what the cause and effect is. The better I understand how my system operates and what leads to good performance, what leads to bad performance, what leads to problems, the better I can pay attention to what are the critical few.

It's not about eliminating important metrics. I mean, if I need 42 metrics, then I need 42. I'd probably challenge that anybody needs 42, but the idea is what really is going to tell us the most so that we can take the most rapid, proactive and focused action at the right place at the right time. By having too much data, we end up with a redundancy which often leads to us chasing many times, the wrong problems instead of focusing on the critical few.

Joe: This is what should drive change?

Jamie: Yes, and it should be dynamic. A lot of people see this as, "Oh, you develop a standard, and this is what we're going to check for the rest of time." It should be changing based on either the priorities changing or the needs changing. Hey, we want to get more focused on safety, so we're going to increase the pace of safety coaching conversations. We're going to pick up the pace of checking people's personal protective equipment. We're going to increase the number of observations we're going to do of people in at-risk situations and observe how they're operating in the environment they're operating in.

So again, I could have good intentions and say we're going to pay more attention to safety. Or I could decide what are the proactive things we're going to do? What's the frequency of those? Who should be doing them, and what's the pacer frequency of doing those things so that we end up with a way to drive that change? In many cases, we find it is turning what people communicate as good intentions into a real plan.

Joe: Now from your experience, because you work with management so often in the Lean process, I wonder how management takes it. Because when you talk about Lean and you talk about standard work, and they talk about it for the office environment and for the shop floor, but when you turn the tables and talk to them about standard work, what reaction do you get?

Jamie: Well, I think a lot of people need to experience it. I think the first reaction that anybody has management or otherwise, standard work is I want my flexibility. I love flexibility. I love being able to do whatever I want when I want to do it. That's great to me. It's not always effective. I'd love not to have to go to the doctor today, but it's probably more effective for me to go. It comes down to one, capturing the knowledge that says this is what we find to be most effective. Then second, I think what people again misunderstand in advance is that this is going to be a rigid thing that says at 9:00 I do this, at 9:12 I do this, at 9:17 I can have a cup of coffee. That's not it.

Again, I think there's a big difference between standard work as a job aid and standard work instructions. There are certain tasks in management that you could probably write standard work instructions for but relatively few. It's really about developing job aids that will help us supply our knowledge consistently and effectively.

Well, I'll say two things. One, an awful lot of times people find that what they know to be proactive they just never get around to. So having the aid really helps them make sure that they don't lose sight of those proactive things, and they don't end up with more problems down the road. So that's really one.

The second thing is that when we start to say, "Well, supervisor to manager or to plant manager or however many levels there might be, when people start to see some of the redundancy and overlap, and we have 15 people checking the same thing, they really find how much freeing it can be to say, "Well, this is what this person's checking.

"We all know what they're going to do if they see something wrong. I really don't have to worry about that anymore. I can go focus on something else." Once they really get into it, that's often a major response.

Because again, so often, in the age of control, in an age of governance and oversight and risk, there's so much redundancy in some of our checks that we're really probably not getting nearly enough out of our management teams as we should.

Joe: Switching gears just a little bit, is control points applicable to let's say PDCA to go from one part of the cycle from the plan cycle to the do cycle? Is that the same terminology? Or would that be the wrong terminology for that?

Jamie: Well, what you would say is that control point standardization is a check. The plan is how we built it. It's what do we think is important to check that helps us predict and prevent future problems? By using it, it is a check. Again when I start to see, well, hey, we missed this because we weren't checking frequently enough, then it gives me some feedback around, well, maybe the frequency of my check is not high enough and I need to change that or maybe the effectiveness of it. Or maybe it's the wrong person doing the check.

We had a quality escape get to the customer. Was there something in our control points that should have prevented that? If so, why did it not work? And if not, is there something we want to add?

Really, using control point standardization effectively is a PDCA cycle, and essentially anything happening that we think we should have found out about sooner is a check. It's telling us that there was a gap between what we thought would happen and what did happen.

Joe: Just a great meeting outline! You take your control points in, and this is the crux of your meeting.

Jamie: It is although not all control points are in a meeting, and in fact a lot of them aren't. They might be going out to look at a metric. They might be having a conversation with a customer. They might be going out and do a visual check--being able to look at how the process is operating. It's a guideline of what you need to do throughout the day, a week, or a month. But a lot of those checks might not happen in a meeting room because where our system is operating in many cases is not in a meeting room. Now it depends on what that process is, and it depends on where our best observations take place.

That's really the question we have to ask, is what is the information we need to tell us we're going to have a problem and where is the best place to find that? In some cases, it's going to be meetings. In some cases, it's not.

Joe: One of the comments you made, I'm not sure if it was an article or in something else that I read from you, but you talked about "kick the what's lurking paranoia." What did you mean by that?

Jamie: Sometimes my coaching leads me to just shadow a manager for a day as part of observation. What we see with a lot of managers is they just spend any window of extra time that they have, they dump one of two places. Either they dump it into email, which we know is a common habit or they just go looking. It's like, "Well, I don't know if we're missing something. I don't know what's going on. I don't know what problems exist." So we just go wandering around somewhat aimlessly looking for problems.

That really comes from a paranoia of saying, it's a well-justified paranoia, and by the way, "I don't know what problems exist. I don't know that our systems are going to catch them, and I don't know that my people are going to raise the issue if they find them." That paranoia is based on experience that suggests that that isn't what happens.

Joe: Well, usually if you go looking for a problem, you usually find one, don't you?

Jamie: You can find one, but that's what reinforces it. I find them at random places at random intervals, so we just think we need to keep investing more in this wandering aimlessly search for problems. But again, control point standardization tells me that if I know that a preventative maintenance task that takes several hours is really important, and I know that our process is for the supervisor in that area to check in with the team once an hour. If they're more than 15 percent behind schedule, they're going to let me know.

If I know that that's the control point, I don't have to go wandering around finding out what's getting missed because I know if there's a problem there, it's going to get found, and it's going to get surfaced because we have that high agreement. We have that standard about what the check is and how to deal with it.

That really gets us out of this aimless wandering of looking for problems and instead builds an organizational response to how do we proactively find the problems at the right place at the right time with the right resources?

Joe: I think another important thing is what you alluded to be that when you go start looking and walking around looking for problems your employees or the people who are working for you, are sitting there watching and saying, "Here comes Jack again." They are wondering what you're going to find because they know that there is no rhyme to reason to what you're looking for.

Jamie: Well, that's exactly right, and what we see what happened a lot of times that the people in the organization, manager will come down and they will ask about a safety issue. And so, the message today is safety is really important. Then the next day, come down and ask about the quality issue and so quality is really important, make sure we pay attention to quality. It becomes this very haphazard sort of ask and respond organizational event where any time a manager asks about some random event, a bunch of people overreact to that and go running around going, "Quality is really important. Quality is really important. Let us put everything on quality." When all it was just one question taken out of context in isolation.

When we make the control points standards visible, we see that...oh I'm paying attention to safety. I'm paying attention to quality. I'm paying attention to delivery. I'm paying attention to these multiple dimensions. And so, it enables people to say, "Oh, this is what we're paying attention to", instead of overreact and respond to the random question-asking that might go on with a manager following up on things.

Joe: Should the control points be kind of like an open book? Should everybody know what your control points are and what you're monitoring?

Jamie: Absolutely. It should be absolutely an open book. If it's a physical environment, we'll even put them up on the board, put them up next to the scoreboard, or whatever is there, make them visible. If it's digital, it should be on an easy place where everybody can find it, changes to them are communicated broadly. So absolutely, it should be an open book. This is in part, just being an open book is in part making the priorities and focus of management more visible both to the whole organization, but also to each other. So that we ... I do know what my boss is focused on. I do know what my peer is focused on. It is meant to create a little bit more open book about what people are paying attention to.

Joe: What's the difference maybe between a control point and a toll gate? In Six Sigma, I think of the toll gate that is used to go from one stage to the next. In DMAIC, it would be like from Define to measure. Is there a difference between a control point and toll gate?

Jamie: No. that's the toll gate or a gateway in product development. These are just types of control points and it's how do I take product development? How do I make sure we really define the customer need before you start tooling up product? I want to make sure before we tool it up it ends up in the marketplace. I can always joke that the Aztec, Pontiac Aztec, had no gates. It probably shouldn't have gotten to market because as soon as it came out everybody said, "Why would you build that?" Gateways, toll gates and any of these things are just from a project basis. There are checks along the way. There are control points to make sure....are we still headed in the right direction before we continue to invest more resources.

In a lot of cases, a toll gate, a gateway if I have at least a minimum set of questions that I'm asking that help me make sure that I'm dealing with it across the many dimensions I need to pay attention to. That list of questions that I ask at that gate is a form, again another form of standard work.

Joe: Is there anything you would like to add to the subject control points?

Jamie: I think I have just come back and emphasized that the really important point around the response. So, this is where when people deal with escalation or problems, when they call escalation pass or they call it andon or whatever it might be, people tend to think only about sort of the problem and how they escalate it.

There are multiple dimensions to this. One is how do I know if it's a problem? We need high agreement about what is a problem, which we find might often not be the case? What is the method of escalating it? So, how I do it? There should be really only one and one consistent way to do that. Who are we escalating it to? Everybody always thinks I escalated it to my boss, which might not be the case.

If I'm a technician in the process and my supervisor is not a technician escalating the problem to them, it might not get me the help I need. Maybe I am escalating to an engineer, maybe I'm escalating to a senior technician and also who really should I escalate that problem to and equally important is how they do they respond? All we find is that if I don't know what response I'm going to get. I'm going to get smacked in the head one time and get help next time.

Well that unreliability of the response when I surface a problem, really leads me to hesitate to surface a problem in the first place. Most organizations when I think about finding and escalating problems, they tend to think about the front end of that process, and you need to put as much thought into the back end, which is really who should we escalate to and what is the defined response?

Joe: I think you got some great points. What's going on with you in the near future or with the Lean Learning Center?

Jamie: Well, in general, we continue to try to be as innovative as possible to help companies move forward and a lot of the things that we continue to do. We continue to invest more into proving them. Things like the Lean Experience, which has been still an effective course with an effective message. We have a fairly new course, "Lean and Lean", which is change agents skills, which we find are often under-invested in, for the critical few that are going to influence the many. We also have a couple of new things coming out very soon.

We have a new simulation. We have several simulations that we sell through the Leanlearningcenter.com website. We have the new one coming out called the Lean Quad, which we've used for many years, but we finally made it ready for sort of off the shelf use for internal change agents and leaders.

Sometime next year, we plan to offer a Lean for HR course to help HR people understand their role in the change and be better prepared for it. So, that's a course we plan to offer publicly that'll be pretty new. So, those are the couple of the new things that we have going on lately.

Joe: It sounds interesting. Especially the change agent, I find it interesting because it is a skill, isn't it.

Jamie: It is and giving people the skills and tools they need to make to be as effective as possible or to influence the rest of the organization is something we often don't think a lot about. We often have either people that are in full time change agent roles going through that class, or those that feel that they have a responsibility as a leader to help make a change happen. We have had COOs, and Vice Presidents and Plant Managers and Lean Champions, Lean Facilitators, Lean Coaches, all through that class, and they actually have one. We offer that publicly about twice a year and always enjoy it because again it's leveling up our change agents skills aside usually turns into a good investment if you are investing in the right person to do that.

Joe: I would like to thank very much. This podcast will be available on the Business901 website and also the business901 iTunes store. So, again thank you very much, Jamie. I appreciate your input. You're one of the real thought leaders I think in the Lean community, and I enjoy following your blog and on Twitter which you can be found on Twitter at…

Jamie: flinchbaugh

Joe: Again thank you very much.

Jamie: Thank you, Joe. I enjoyed it.

Business901 *Podcast Transcription*

Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

Joseph T. Dager

Lean Six Sigma Black Belt

Ph: 260-438-0411   Fax: 260-818-2022

Email: jtdager@business901.com

Web/Blog: http://www.business901.com

Twitter: @business901

***What others say:** In the past 20 years, Joe and I have collaborated on many difficult issues. Joe's ability to combine his expertise with "out of the box" thinking is unsurpassed. He has always delivered quickly, cost effectively and with ingenuity. A brilliant mind that is always a pleasure to work with." James R.*

Joe Dager is President of Business901, a progressive company providing direction in areas **such as Lean Marketing, Product Marketing, Product Launches and Re-Launches. As a Lean** Six Sigma Black Belt, Business901 provides and implements marketing, project and performance planning methodologies in small businesses. The simplicity of a single flexible model will create clarity for your staff and as a result better execution. My goal is to allow you spend your time on the **need versus the plan**.

An example of how we may work: Business901 could start with a consulting style utilizing an individual from your organization or a virtual assistance that is well versed in our principles. We have **capabilities to plug virtually any marketing function** into your process immediately. As proficiencies develop, Business901 moves into a coach's role supporting the process as needed. The goal of implementing a system is that the processes will become a habit and not an event.

Business901   Podcast Opportunity   Expert Status

Can Control Points add Value in Lean?