

Business901

Podcast Transcription

Implementing Lean Marketing Systems



Leading Lean from the Middle

Guest was Paul Yandell



Related Podcast:

[Transforming Lean thru Middle Managers](#)

[Transforming Lean thru Middle Managers](#)
[Copyright Business901](#)

Business901

Podcast Transcription

Implementing Lean Marketing Systems



About Paul Yandell, President, [Value Stream Focus](#)

Professional Experience: Successful and varied manufacturing and operations experience in companies ranging from startups to multinationals. Proven record of leadership developing and implementing world-class lean manufacturing operations and supply chain across multiple industries that reduce cost, improve service, and enhance new product implementation. Winner, 2007 Pacific Northwest Silver Medallion Shingo Prize for Excellence in Manufacturing. Particular strengths in building infrastructure to support turnaround and growth situations, building and leading teams in total quality environments.

Principal Areas of Practice: Manufacturing and Supply Chain specialist with strong skills in identifying and eliminating waste and improving operational performance. Paul is an excellent trainer and team builder.

Education/Qualifications

- MBA IESE, Barcelona, Spain. Bilingual (Spanish).
- BS University of California at Berkeley
- ASQ Certified Six Sigma Black Belt
- Lean Manufacturing Certified, APICS CPIM
- Lead Instructor, UC San Diego Lean Enterprise Certification Program
- Nationally recognized speaker on Lean Leadership (AME, CSCMP, ASQ)
- Vistage (the World's Largest CEO Organization) Member

[Transforming Lean thru Middle Managers](#)
[Copyright Business901](#)

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

Paul Yandell: ...managing from below. I speak to middle managers; I was a resident with them. I think most of us have been middle managers and understood those frustrations. I hit on a theme that guerilla manager years and years ago, and I've actually given a similar talk to a number of national and local forums. It really resonates with people, because people stuck in the middle are trying to figure, "What do I do? How do I be effective?" And many of them are waiting for leadership. I've also done a lot of teaching, and I find my students are the same way. They're kind of like, "I'm learning Lean tools, but how do I put them to use?" I'm trying to say, "Just go right ahead. Don't wait for your CEO to say, 'We're going to go down this path.' Just start leading the company from the middle, and you can be quite effective." We did that at Dimension One Spas, and we completely turned around the culture and transformed the company to a Lean company. We ended up winning a regional Shingo prize. It was a validation of our efforts.

But it was really like a middle management revolt, if you will. The owner, like many small business owners, didn't take a strong interest in manufacturing. They want to make sure there are no problems in manufacturing, but they're not really sure how to build things. They're more sales people or finance people, generally. When they see someone getting traction, they generally kind of say, "OK." As long as you're getting top management support, you don't need top management leadership. I think many people think they need leadership. There's a big difference. I think you can lead from the middle if you have support from the top.

Joe Dager: You're singing my message, Paul. I've already started the podcast because I thought what you just said there was golden. So with me today is Paul Yandell. This is Joe

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

Dager with the Business901 podcast, and I'd like to welcome Paul. Paul, can you give me that elevator speech about your company Value Stream Focus?

Paul: Well, Value Stream Focus is a small consulting company. We just started several years ago working with companies to lower their cost. That's really what companies are looking for. I use a number of tools starting with Lean, that's my background is Lean. We've added Six Sigma and of course, common sense goes a long way. We've combined those in the pot, and bang! Costs go down. That's basically how it works.

Joe: Well, you're one of the few people that I've ever heard talk about middle management. And to me, I'll flat out say it. In every successful company that I've been associated with, middle managers were the keys, and the unsuccessful ones, middle managers were the keys.

Paul: That's it. I mean, if you understand middle management, then you can make it work. Middle management you have to realize started out as being basically lower management. Most of them learned on the job in some capacity. They're not highly trained, generally speaking, or they've had technical training. Some of them are very, very well-trained. But you have a mixing of these people, and you have to speak to them. They were really good at doing the status quo. That's how they got to be middle managers, and they're going to cling to that. Your best operator, you say, "OK, now you're in charge of the operators," and then you grow, and then you grow, and then you grow, and 15, 20 years later that guy's your production manager and he's good at all the old little things, the tricks, the piles under the desk, knowing where everything is, all the tribal knowledge.

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

They're not inclined to change, and until they see benefits, they could really kill you. So there's a lot of nodding, and they all know that managers and owners change, and they're agreeable. But in the end, their comfort zone is doing what they were successful at and, until they can be successful at something else, why would they do anything differently, really? You know, why would they change?

Joe: Yes, and I think that's the key. Because everybody always comes down saying, "Oh, we're going to do this and we're going to do this," and the poor middle manager's stuck in the middle, because he still has to get it out the door. He still has to assist the people to perform, and he's always the one stuck in the middle. We always talk about leadership, and we're always talking about respect for people or the worker, but who respects that middle manager?

Paul: Well said. The other side of it is this. I mean, there's a certain level of fear on that shop floor. They know most businesses have some kind of seasonality or growth spurts, and they know when business turns down a little bit, they can look around and they know some of their peers are not going to be in the room in the next month or so. They also know that by and large the office never changes. So, they basically don't...And we're talking in the manufacturing setting. They're survivors. They know how to do work quicker when they need to work quicker. They know how to kind of stretch it out when they need to stretch it out. I mean, this is their life, this is their world. If you're trying to change that equation, you really need to speak to those people. Not only the people who are in management positions, but the informal leaders as well. It might be the janitor is a really important person in your business, because he's related to 20 other people in your company, and he's kind of the patriarch or the matriarch, whichever.

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

You just have to realize all of these equations and cross currents that are out there. Of course, the CEO is the most powerful person, but making a speech and wanting to make a change doesn't make change. We all know that structure has to go with culture; the two have to go together. You see it in literature a lot, that culture eats strategy for lunch. It's so true. So you need to have a structure and a culture together that will facilitate the strategy that the CEO wants to implement. They can't implement it without some effective way of handling change on the lower and middle ranks. The best and most effective way of managing change is really through kaizen and through groupthink and through an atmosphere that people can make mistakes, and they're not penalized for it.

Going back to the whole middle management conundrum is they're afraid to make mistakes, because they've seen people who make mistakes. If you have any black mark on your record, when it comes to layoffs those are the first guys that go. Everybody knows, I mean, they're not stupid. They may have had less opportunity, or they may be an immigrant.

I mean, some of the people on the shop floor guys, they were doctors and lawyers and teachers in a former life. This is the opportunity they have in the States, and we have to be aware of that. I think that we have to give them more credit and speak to them if we want to make lasting change. I've been successful at it. I feel comfortable with that statement.

Joe: Well, leadership still has to call you in, though, to get in touch with the middle managers, because those are difficult people to reach, they're not the easy ones to be on an email list or to be accessible that much through the phone at anytime, because they're on the floor.

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

Paul: Well, here's what happens. If you look at the four drivers of Lean if you simplify your model, and you look at first workplace organization. Then from there you look at flow, uninterrupted flow. Then from there you look at quality at the source. Then from there you look at single-minute exchange of die. If you look at that progression...And we're going to start with organizing workplace, the 5S or 6S, lots of different versions of that, when you start and localize there, and you start cleaning up and sorting and finding tools that maintenance thought were stolen from them and were just left in work areas and so forth, and you start cleaning and organizing, it makes a big impact. 5S is the biggest; it's visual change, and everyone can see it. Those are all things that could be done in middle management ranks without a budget and without a lot of fanfare. Let's give ownership and top management credit, too. They're sensitive; they just don't know quite how to get the message across, but when they see that happening, they're going to like it. They're going to applaud it.

The middle managers who are trying to effect change, people like plant managers or production managers who are starting these efforts, they ought to be shown off. Now, what I learned is that, if you start cleaning and organizing and helping people improve their workstations, pretty soon other departments lineup and they want the same thing. "Hey, when are you going to come and fix my area? When are we going to do a kaizen in my area?" And what'll happen is, it'll start getting a life of its own.

The other thing, though, you have to be sensitive to is, let's talk about budgets for a minute. Let's suppose you're trying to change an organization, but you're doing it on your own, you don't have a budget. You're certainly not going to shut down the plant for a week

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

while you do a kaizen in one department. Or, you don't have a lot of money like that you can throw at it.

If you look at the basic setup of kaizen, you can do that in a couple of afternoons and on a Saturday. What we did is, we developed a formula of what we call a mini-kaizen. On Tuesday afternoon, we would get together at maybe the last hour or two of work and a few hours of overtime. We bring in pizza for the guys. We would do a brief introduction to Lean concepts, an idea of what we're trying to do, talk about those four drivers of Lean that I mentioned.

Then we would meet again on Friday, after they had thought about it, maybe do an exercise like a paper airplane exercise or something where the guys could understand what we're trying to do with single-piece flow or maybe a cellular manufacturing change.

On Friday, we talk about what we're actually going to do. What is the task at hand that we want to do on Saturday? Bring the guys in and do the transformation on Saturday. We had support from the departments on either side of a given department. We had maintenance and engineering involved, and so forth. Then from that, we were able to make huge transformations in the plant without a big budget and without having to go to top management approval, for the most part. Pretty soon you can start turning an organization on its end. I mean, it doesn't take very long. It catches on like wildfire. Because people are interested, people want to be involved.

Joe: I think that's a great strategy to do, because success breeds success.

Paul: Oh, yes.

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

Joe: And the people looking from the outside in, they want to get in the cool group!

Paul: Oh, yes. Now, here's even better if you want to be in the cool group. If you can give away t-shirts if you can start branding your effort. We'd get a little insignia that said, it basically...It was funny, because we did this insignia that we wrote out. One of the guys' mothers was Japanese, and so she wrote what Kaizen was in Japanese. We made this emblem brand our efforts, and it said kaizen in Japanese and Dimension One Kaizen. We made t-shirts to that effect. We were branding it all over the place in our company. Then we had a Japanese customer came in. Of course, most of our workforce in this case was Hispanic. A customer from Japan came, and he saw this insignia, and he was looking, and he's looking, and he couldn't figure it out. He goes, "Zen kai, Zen kai. Oh, kaizen!" We had it reversed! Instead of good change, we had change good. But of course, in Spanish that's how you say it. Actually it worked out, worked well. We had the wrong translation, but we got it right.

So those kind of things become part of the culture of the company. Everyone wants a kaizen t-shirt or a zenkai t-shirt. That's an easy way...I mean, a t-shirt's a pretty easy way to build change in your company.

Joe: You won a Shingo Prize by working with middle management, right?

Paul: Yes. In fact, to be honest, we won a Silver Shingo and not the Gold Shingo. I asked the examiner; I said, "So why did we not win Gold?" And he says, "Because ownership has no idea what you're doing." He said, "It's unreal, Paul, what you've done. It's unreal. But I've got to tell you, the owners -- it was a husband and wife team -- they don't really have a clue." I thought wow. And it's so true, I couldn't argue with that. So I mean, all of the

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

elements were in place. All of the numbers were in place, all the benefits in place. After we had done a conversion in the warehouse and basically cut our inventory by over, by half, basically, cut it in half in two-and-a-half months. We're walking through the plant, the owner and I. And Bob says, "Well, Paul, I don't know where you got this Lean stuff, but it really works." There you go, that's support but not leadership, I would say.

Joe: You talked about the change group structure. Can you tell me and explain that more to me?

Paul: Well, understand that this was happening in the late 1990s, and no one really knew exactly what Lean was. We all, of course, had heard of JIT and trying to know what that means. We started having brown bag lunches where we actually bought a couple books. This is people from engineering. We didn't have manufacturing/engineering at the time, but we had some engineers, and my production planner and myself, and a couple production managers. We would read these cases in early books and kind of talk about them at lunch, and that kind of developed awareness. Then I got permission to teach a class. I called it Advanced Manufacturing Techniques, and I taught that in-house. It was basically elements of Lean, and again, I taught this to the same group. So, we did it at lunch. What we did is, we had brought in pizza or something, and we had it on Tuesday and Thursday, and I had half the crew on a Tuesday and half the crew on Thursday. We made it a hour-and-a half. This way, by bringing the lunch they give you their time, as it works. So if you bring them a pizza, then you can ask a guy to sit through lunch and a class, and it's not uncool.

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

I gave the same class twice a week, and I treated it as a serious class. I gave tests, exams, and so forth. We included some statistics and some Shingo writings and so forth. That kind of developed an awareness in middle management. So then, we were surprised by a few of the guys that I didn't expect much out of really stepped up in the class.

They became leaders when we started doing Kaizen; it was kind of like very scary to do a Kaizen, their first Kaizen. We had no idea what we are doing. We had no consultants and no budget for it. We didn't even talk with the owners about it. We just decided OK let's try this. Kind of scary and the first Kaizen we did was really just a 5S Kaizen at the department where there wasn't any measurable results other than it looked cleaner and better, if you will.

We found, I joked about maintenance stools, we actually found a lot of maintenance tools. Our maintenance will say, "They stole our tools," and all this, but what happened is the bell rang, the maintenance walk out of the job and left some tools around. I don't think that's too uncommon. We did a 5S, and it wasn't much to be excited about.

The next department that we went to, we transformed in from a basically a huge batch operation into a cell. In that case, it was dramatic. We changed three day's inventory into about an hour's inventory or less. Everybody, the whole place stood on end when we did that. We freed up a relatively huge amount of space without that entire inventory, as you can imagine.

The really change group boiled down to, I developed a three-man team, and this is very important. We developed a team where I had, this is the first time I was able to get a manufacturing engineer, he came out of engineering, basically to step sideways into

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

manufacturing engineering. Then I had one guy who did documentation, and we attached a maintenance person to this team as well.

So we had a guy who understood about as much about Lean as I did. We had a documentation guy who used to really came out of the quality department, didn't know anything about Lean but he was fully bilingual, as myself and most of our workforce was Hispanic and not all of them were bilingual. Working in different languages was part of what we need to do.

Then we also had this maintenance guy who was attached, who I took out of maintenance. So at this time I was the plant manager, essentially, and vice-president of manufacturing. We had the cellular change, and we were able to relocate electrical drops and so forth with the help of this maintenance guy. And that became our core structure. And that Lean team if you will is what rolled the changes. Three guys could drive the change throughout and then we could leave with our documented work constructions, photo documented and really left our mark.

In that case we did a paper airplane exercise. No one had ever heard one-piece flow; it was very scary. One thing about doing a paper airplane exercise, you can always put the troublemakers and the disbelievers in a few of the chairs. I am sure most of the listeners are familiar with that. There is a few tasks in that exercise that are little bit more frenetic than other tasks, and so you put the influential disbelievers in those chairs and you have fun with them and pretty soon they are on your team and they'll say, "OK, let's try it."

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

Literally we left work on a Friday with this huge batch, operational in three days of inventory, and then we came back on Monday with a little cell and all this inventory we basically moved out of the space and then weaned it down.

Within a week, basically, since we didn't have to make a lot of inventory, we had a few days that we could continue moving into our new digs, if you will, and painting and making it look right on Monday and Tuesday while we worked off the extra inventory. Wow. That became a model for the rest of the plant.

Once you get a few successes it takes off and start with a few easy 5S type kaizen and then you're on your way, I would suggest.

Joe: What was your largest hurdle to overcome?

Paul: Materials group was living in MRP land, and we kept having troubles with materials, so what we did is we did a Kanban system throughout the plant for all of the re-supply of the floor. I worked, and I worked and I worked. I was actually good friends with the VP of Operations his title was, basically, materials manager and a lot of other hats. The plant was humming, but we kept having problems with materials and finally that gentleman decided to go and develop his own business in insurance. The owner came to me with him, and they said, "We want you to take over materials. We've seen what you've done in the plant." No problem. We put in the Kanban system with our vendors, and we chopped that inventory in no time.

We had vendors bringing in their other customers saying, "Hey, customer, can't you be like dimension one and do it this way? Look how great it is." We ran out of stock-up problems,

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

and we greatly reduced our inventory. We freed up all kinds of space. You can only do so much as a middle manager because you're not the boss. You can show people what could be done; you can teach them, you can offer to help them, but at some point it really does help to be the boss.

Once I'm the boss of the warehouse, of purchasing, it was like OK, good. They had seen enough. We went to another company; I visited another company with them to see what a vendor Kanban situation would look like. They bought in. In no time, they were singing the song. Leslie Mae, who became my purchasing manager, I've seen her do presentations at CSEMP's national conference on how to do a vendor Kanban.

This is something we just did ourselves. People are willing to learn if you give them an opportunity and they'll own it if you let them.

Joe: I think that's what's so important because I always hear this top-down driven type culture and these mandates that we're going to be a Lean company and it's got to be the vision from leadership and it's got to be this saying we're going to become Lean and everything and I flat out don't think that works. In certain circumstances, it might work, but...

Paul: Of course, it does work but let's agree that the middle management makes it work. So if the top management says, "This is how we're going," and he's able to get the alignment within his company top to bottom. Then he's got it. The real problem is alignment. If you say, you're going to change, but you don't change your structure...I mean, Lean is all about turning the triangle upside down. If you look at a triangle, a normal triangle with the apex at the top, this is in a people-centered organization, the classic

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

organization where the boss tells everybody else what to do. If you are continuously, that's how all your information flows, then what happens is it's hard to drive change through that organization. You're going to tell people what to do, but they may or may not buy into it. They're kind of waiting for you to go away or for the wind to change.

Now, if you can through continuous improvement, through Lean techniques, if you can switch that, flop that triangle around so the apex is at the bottom, now what happens...you have a flat part of the triangle at the top, if you will. Now you have a situation where the supervisor is saying, "OK, I need you to make green ones, 200 of them, and then I need you to make a bunch of red ones, 200 of them." Instead, now the conversation is, the supervisor is at the bottom of the triangle, and the center of the work is now the operator. Now the conversation is, "OK, operator, how can I help you do your work better? How can I help you improve your operations? How can I help you do a better job?"

Suddenly, the conversation has changed, and it will never go back because the operator goes, "Oh, well you know, my back hurts every day. If you could raise this desk another two inches, this table, or if you could improve my chair, they'd give me a back to my chair, I'd be a lot better."

Now the operator makes 15 percent more work and then their back doesn't hurt and now, all their friends, they want you to pay attention to them too. Because, "You helped Mary, why don't you come over and look at me? I need a better light over here. And you think I could get a new knife? This one has a bad blade, and it takes me forever to cut this item."

You'd find out all this stuff that you never knew. If you just walk through the area and look at it, everyone looks busy, everyone looks like they know what they're doing, and no one

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

tells you what they need, because no one ever listened before, why should they listen now? You don't want to be a complainer. That's middle management right there.

Joe: Yes, and I think you hit the nail on the head, because I guess I would summarize that you become an enabler of work.

Paul: Well said; you're an enabler instead of a taskmaster.

It's totally different. I mean, here's how Taiichi Ohno setup Toyota. He basically says, "Look; the Kanban is the production control system. It's a pull system. It's all based on demand. It's not based on what the boss says to do today. Your boss is the customer. If the customer orders black wire, you strip more black wire. If the order flow switches over to short red wires, you're going to strip more short red wires. You don't need a list to tell you what to do. You're going to refill Kanban; you're going to use your pull systems to tell you exactly what to build, all the way down to the vendor." This is a cascading effect. If you're running around with pieces of paper with hot lists, and all this stuff that has become American manufacturing, that's all about being a boss and being a bully. "I need this right away! No, stop what you're doing, do this instead!" The worker thinks you're an idiot because you keep stopping him and starting him. Instead of working for the customer, now he's working for what he thinks is your whim. There's a lot of distrust and a lot of rolling their eyes whenever the boss comes around with his last piece of hot sheet, his latest piece of paper. They're not stupid. These people have families; they have lives, and they make the same decisions on a daily basis as you and I. You shouldn't belittle them; you should put them on a pedestal.

Joe: What you're saying is common sense, which Lean is basically, common sense..

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

Paul: It's not that common, it's not that common, buddy.

Joe: Yes, right, but it's not that common. Why not?

Paul: Well, it goes back to, OK, to where we started the conversation. Middle management got there by being the best operators or the best at doing it the way it was, and they cling to that out of fear. They're good at it; they always came up with a solution where they were able to meet that deadline or save that order, and so that's your man. Your relationships and you have your go-to guys, and your go-to methods, and that's generally how it works. Labor has worked it out, and they're good with that. Until people see the vision of what can be, until they see anything different, why should they change? Just saying it's going to change from top management doesn't change it. You need to show them that it's different. Who's going to do that but middle managers? It's not done in the classroom; it's done on the shop floor or in the office.

You know, I had a situation...I didn't realize what was going on, but this is, again, common sense. When I first joined the same company, Dimension One, the receptionist kept coming back...I had the first aid cabinet right by my desk, and the receptionist kept coming back and getting aspirin all the time. I mean, it was like a ritual.

I walked up to see her once at the front, and what happened is, she was handling the door and also on the phone, and on the computer. We had her multitasking, and this lady had a headache. OK, why? Well, she was cradling the phone on her neck, and she was looking at a computer that was down low and she was all scrunching.

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

Her desk was totally not set up for work. All I did was, I got a couple of books, I put them underneath her monitor and it lifted them up. And I ordered her a headset, at the time it was \$50 or \$70. All of a sudden her headaches went away, and she was feeling a lot better. She came back a couple days later; a week later or so and said, "Man, thanks a lot. That really makes a big difference."

I thought, "Wow. It wasn't any big deal." I didn't think anything of it at the time, but that's an example of looking at your operators who are not set up to be successful. Here she was in pain all the time and really didn't feel empowered or didn't know how to improve her situation. She didn't work for me, by the way. She was just the receptionist; I was just helping her out.

Joe: What I find common, though, is when someone else looks at something and from a distance, they see the obvious.

Paul: Oh, yes. Her boss walked by her every day. "How are you doing today?" "Oh, I'm great." "All right, well good. Good to see you." She's not going to complain unless you ask questions. OK, now if the same boss could ask a question, "What can I do to improve your situation? How are you doing? Are you comfortable? Does that chair workout? I see that you're kind of on the phone a lot, but would it help if I got you a headset?" I mean, her boss could've done the same thing, but her boss wasn't asking those questions.

Joe: When does Lean not work? When would you say management or the structure of an organization would prevent you from starting?

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

Paul: I can tell you because I tried it another company, and that's how I became a consultant was I resigned from another company where I couldn't get it to do one. Here's the difference. If you have a culture of fear, it will not work. The culture of fear, what I'm speaking to is, you have to be allowed to experiment, and you have to be allowed to make mistakes. Like my old boss at Dimension One where I was very successful, if I made a mistake...And I made plenty of mistakes, believe me, I make enough decisions in a day, probably several of them are wrong every day. Some of them were big wrongs. Some of them were expensive wrongs.

But anyway, Bob, what he said to me is, "What did you learn?" I mean if you're going to make a mistake, the reason to make it is to learn from it. There's no other reason to make it. Otherwise, it is just bad. Let's at least salvage something out of it, let's learn. Let's not make the same mistake over and over again. Sometimes you could make it twice, even. But let's not make it over and over again. You have to be allowed to make the mistakes.

One of the best things I did was, when I first joined Dimension One, I had this idea, "I know, let's make these carts." We had plumbing hoses on the ground, and I thought it was making the product dirty, and I thought it was important that we not do that. We didn't have very many maintenance resources, and I really put it on a high priority to make these little carts for me and so forth.

We put the hose on the carts, and I went out on the floor, after we had these carts, I was all proud and stuff. They were using the carts, and everyone was trying to be happy about it and smiling and stuff. A week later, I went out there, and I could see that they were kind of struggling with the carts. They just weren't working very well.

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

I went to the supervisor, and I said, "Well, these carts are not working out very well, are they?" And he kind of looked at me, and he goes, "No, not really." I said, "Well, let's get rid of them then." He goes, "Oh really?" I said, "Yes, that was a stupid idea." They dumped the carts right then and there, and everyone was relieved. It was because I was able to say, "Hey, I made a mistake. It's OK."

Your boss has to allow you to make mistakes. That's the support you need. You don't need a lot of money, but they have to be patient and, in order to do that, in order to get that, you need to communicate with your boss; you need to share your manufacturing vision with them.

They need to know that you have a plan. If you have a plan and you are moving forward, even if you misstep somewhat, you're OK. You need to manage your boss is what I speak to you. The first thing you do when you are managing your boss is you make sure that if they look good, then you know that you look good. So you take care of their agenda first. You find out what they need, and you give it to them.

Then you are allowed to shape the agenda. After you take care of their needs, you can start taking care of yours. If you report on a weekly basis, for instance, to your boss, you say, "OK, here is the four projects you asked about. Here is the status, and I am also doing project number five and six." You have now got tacit approval to work on projects five, and six and those might be your lean transformations and you put them in easy to understand language.

What will happen is, every week they hear now project five and six have moved up a little bit. Why? Because you are taking care of their agenda. They'll let you know if they don't

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

want you working on something. As long as you have that communication and you keep on working on it, "We finished project five, we did this five best in the plumbing department or in the order entry area and I would love for you to come out and see it sometime," it's likely he'll show up, or she will show up.

You have an opportunity to shape the agenda by your own communication as a middle manager, to develop a reporting system and do it weekly and start managing up. If you manage up, you can get the support. If you have the support, you can make the transformation. That's really what it boils down to.

Joe: I think that's great advice because people sometimes forget that you got to make your boss look good that's part of it, OK.

Paul: Oh yeah, and never say anything bad about him. You need to build it up. You need to clearly be part of the team. You can't say bad things about other people too. OK, in order to be effective in an organization, as a middle manager yourself or a senior manager, is you have to be a positive force. You have to add something to the mix. You need to work on your own skills first. You need to work, and make sure that you know something about Lean, if you are going to use lean as your vehicle. You need to have business literacy; you need to understand how your company makes money and speak to that. You need to help other people. Workers like to especially if you are looking at working across the organization. If you want engineering to help you, you get to help them. So I look at it as team effort. If you are in a relay race and you are handing off the baton, if it falls on the ground, you both lose.

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

I always go above and beyond what I need to to help my fellow managers. I make sure all my people do it as well. Often times they complain, "Oh they are always this, they are never that." Doesn't matter. You always help the other people, because it does come around. By always helping the other people, be the engineering or quality or administration, sales whatever it is, what will happen is when you do need support, those guys are there for you.

You will eventually need their support because remember you are not the boss. You are not the CEO. You are not the owner. So why would these people cooperate with you if you don't help them? They don't see what's in it for them. To be an effective middle manager is way more than just doing your own agenda. It's helping others fulfill their agenda, and it's making sure above and beyond that your own boss has their agenda filled and that you communicate with them on a regular basis.

What will happen is, eventually you'll get the nod like, in the case where the operations VP left, the CEO comes down and says, "Hey I want you to take this over," and bam! We were ready to go. We turned that thing around in no time. There wasn't like, "Well, what do I do now?" I know what to do. I just couldn't get the other guy to do it.

Joe: Hey it's great. I can go on and on Paul, OK. This is a great conversation. But is there something you would like to leave everyone with, to kind of sum up things a little bit here?

Paul: What I would say is, treat people with respect at all levels and understand that the middle managers, they are trying to do their job. If you can show them the way, you will change lives. Every time you walk on the floor, people will smile at you. They know the difference. You don't have to win the Shingo prize to feel the success. I have never been

Business901

Podcast Transcription



Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

prouder in that organization that I really was instrumental in lifting those people up where they were empowered to improve their own workplace. They love it. They were more comfortable and more productive than ever. You could argue that that company would have never made it had they not gone Lean. This recession has been tough on everybody.

What we are really talking about is improving the workforce and the workplace. When you improve the workplace, you will improve the bottom line. There is no question about it. You just have to make sure that you handle your boss's agenda, that you help your other managers at your own level and that you have a plan moving forward to develop your organization, develop your people and they'll do you right. I don't have any doubt about that.

Joe: What's the best way for someone to get a hold of you?

Paul: They could check out my website, valuestreamfocus.com. I love to share ideas with people, talk with people, work for people. Let me know how I can help them out, you bet.

Joe: OK.

Paul: Thank you so much.

Joe: OK. Well, I appreciate it very much, Paul. It's a very great conversation. This podcast will be available on the Business901 blog site and the Business901 iTunes store. So thanks again, Paul.

Business901

Podcast Transcription

Implementing Lean Marketing Systems



Paul: Well thanks very much for your service. I have checked out a couple of your podcasts. Your podcasts, they're really great, a great resource on the Web. Thank you very much.

Business901

Podcast Transcription

Implementing Lean Marketing Systems



Joseph T. Dager

Lean Marketing Systems

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

Email: jtdager@business901.com

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

Twitter: [@business901](https://twitter.com/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](#)

[Transforming Lean thru Middle Managers](#)
[Copyright Business901](#)