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Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

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How to Implement your Kaizen Event Successfully

Guest was Mark Hamel, Author of
The Kaizen Event Fieldbook



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Mark R. Hamel is a Lean Six Sigma Implementation Consultant. He has played a transformative role in lean implementations across a broad range of industries including aerospace and defense, automotive, building products, business services, chemical, durable goods, electronics, insurance, healthcare and transportation services. Mark has successfully coached lean leaders and associates at both the strategic and tactical level. He has facilitated hundreds of kaizen events and conducted numerous training sessions and workshops.



Mark's 19-year pre-consulting career encompassed executive and senior positions within operations, strategic planning, business development, and finance. His lean education and experience began in the early 1990's when he conceptualized and helped launch what resulted in a Shingo award-winning effort at the Ensign-Bickford Company.

A National Shingo Prize examiner, Mark assisted in the development of the Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME)/Association for Manufacturing Excellence (AME)/Shingo Lean Certification exam questions. He is also Juran certified as a six sigma black belt and a member of SME, AME, and APICS. Mark is the author of the SME published, *Kaizen Event Fieldbook: Foundation, Framework, and Standard Work for Effective Events* and blogs about lean at Gemba Tales.



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Joe Dager: Thanks everyone for joining us. This is Joe Dager, the host of Business 901 Podcast. Participating in the program today is Mark Hamel, the author of the Kaizen Event Fieldbook and blogger at Gemba Tales. Mark, could you introduce yourself and then tell me what prompted you to write the Kaizen Event Fieldbook?

Mark Hamel: But first of all Joe, thanks for having me on. I really appreciate it. I've been a lean implementation consultant for about six years now, after about 19 years in the industry. Had a crazy idea about writing a book about two years ago. And actually I kind of accidentally fell into it. I shouldn't say accidentally, but it kind of prompted me to write a few chapters, send it into Society Manufacturing Engineers, who were my publisher. And they said, at that time, "Sure, let's do it." I kind of rolled into it in that manner, and it's been a lot of fun. It's been a very interesting journey.

Joe: Why did you pick a Kaizen event as your topic?

Mark: Excellent question. Some people will disparage Kaizen events. You'll hear pejoratives like Kaizen in a box, kamikaze Kaizen, Kaizen paint by numbers, popcorn Kaizen. And it's true that Kaizen events many times have been misapplied by people who miss the big picture from a lean perspective or even continuous recruitment. So what I wanted to do was bring people back to the context that Kaizen event should be within, which is really within a lean business system. And also really bring people face to face with: "How should I really deploy Kaizen?"

Now there's really two different levels here - actually three if you're a follower of the Shingo Prize Criteria. First one is tool-driven Kaizen. Essentially I've got a Kaizen hammer

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and everything looks like a nail. And I'm just going to do a Kaizen event here, or a Kaizen event there, the effectiveness is pretty limited.

The next level is what people call "system-driven Kaizen," which is pretty familiar for most people, especially since the book "Learning to See" came out. And that's Kaizen events, and just-do-its, and improvement projects that are related to, typically, values for improvement plans. So systemic thinking or systems thinking, really driving, were, in fact, pulling the Kaizen activity.

Where we want to go through next, kind of the ultimate level is "principal-driven Kaizen," which is system-driven Kaizen plus daily Kaizen. So this is really where you get empowered and engage people. We're doing Kaizen each and every day. It doesn't have to be a big Kaizen event. Could be a mini event, could be a day, and could be a couple of days. It could be, "Hey, I want to move this particular tool or file or whatever from point A to point B."

It' more points of view. It could be very simple types of stuff supported by things like suggestion systems. It could be supported by Kaizen circle activities so on and so forth.

I just wanted to state that from a contextual standpoint, obviously, that it's consistent or should be consistent with a lean business system. So context, and then when we get into actually how to apply Kaizen, we're talking about really understanding a lean leader's perspective which the book gets into.

Then a multi-phased approach, Kaizen strategy. We want to Kaizen what matters, so it should be pulled again by things like evaluation of improvement plans and things of that

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nature. We want to have good pre-event planning, which is many times where people kick it down the road. They don't do a very good job relative to scoping the event, selecting the proper members on the team, not identifying the targets well, communicating, so on and so forth. Then we get into to what people normally think of as the execution phase; just that three or four, or five days or whatever, where we're actually executing the Kaizen event.

A lot of people do halfway decent at that but we want to make sure that we're following the proper process or storyline if you will, applying the right rigor, and applying good work strategies among other things so we can have really have good team effectiveness.

Then the place, where people really fall down, is in the follow-through. This is where the sustainability usually falls off the table. There are many things that need to happen, it's not just after the final report out that everyone packs up and leaves the building, jumps on the airplane, gets in the car, or whatever, and it's over.

There's got to be some rigor on the follow through, not the least of which is really elements of a lead management system where you're employing leader standard in work to make sure that we do have process adherence to the new standard of work that should be employed. So really long winded answer, apologize for that, but that's kind of the perspective.

Joe: Well you mentioned one thing, and I am always inquisitive about this because seems to be that every time I read a book it always tells me how I am supposed to do the preplan, what I am supposed to do, what I am supposed to do during the event. Then you

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get to the sustainability part of it, and that's the shortest chapter in the book and it's over with but that's the toughest thing to do.

The question I have is: "What are some of the key things that you need to do to make a Kaizen event sustain?"

Mark: Good, good question! So within the event, when you're in the execution phase, certainly by the latter portions of the event - and we know it is a plan, do, check, act, type of approach - but as we come up into taking our improvement ideas and developing the post-Kaizen situation, we need to validate that new standard of work within the events. So if you are doing an industrial application, often times it is pretty easy depending upon the cycle times to actually implement, apply the standard work, train people, and run the line, the cell, whatever, for multiple shifts. And in doing that plan, do, check, act, make the adjustments and fine tune that standard work so that we can leave the Kaizen event knowing that it works and that it is explicit and that it is properly documented, as well, on the standard worksheets, and standard work combination sheets, and that type of stuff.

In a transactional environment, the format might be a little bit different if you are dealing with really long lead times. For example, like a bodily injury claims process, you might end up doing tabletop simulations but you definitely want to test it and keep adjusting it.

Another big thing is obviously communicating and training the folks in the new way. Then on the follow upside, you can't just introduce it and let it flop there. So this is where the lean leaders really need to come into play to make sure that there is process assurance with the new standard work, and also checking process performance.

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We can do that through a number of different ways, primarily the lean management system, which is comprised of the leader's standard work. So actually physically going somewhere and observing reality, hopefully, aided by good visual controls to tell if they're getting a normal condition or an abnormal condition, to know whether or not there is process assurance.

And also, from a daily accountability perspective, "Am I getting the performance?" whether it is a plan versus actual chart or whatever to give you that feedback, and then to respond to that.

So you end up going from really a plan, do, check, act situation to a standardized do, check, act, where I'm checking the standards to make sure that they are being applied, to make sure that they are sufficient and if they're not then I make adjustments to those. The rubber really meets the road; people happily get into lean implementation. The rubber meets the road often when it's like, "OK we got some new standard work and this is in many ways a test of whether or not people are going to live and apply standard work."

Joe: That's nice that you talk about standard work that way because I like that description of it. You're really coming out of a Kaizen event. You've readjusted standard work a little bit then. Correct?

Mark: Absolutely. And if it's a fresh kind of a virgin site or process, it does not have standard work. It's brand new standard work. So, it's not even adjusted. It's been, I shouldn't say invented, but has been created. So, we really want to be leading it up. I've actually changed my standard work for Kaizen Events. Hopefully not, but sometimes on that last day, I have the team leaders walk me through the Gemba with the leader's

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standard work and we go point by point, kind of bus stop by bus stop, and we check. I'm checking to make sure that these people are working in accordance to standard work.

So, where's the standard work that I can look at, and I can do a comparison? What's the max level? What happens when I hit the max level? So on and so forth. So, you really need to think through that and test it in order to know that it will stand up.

In the end, it's really got to be the leaders that are executing the leader's standard work. Whether it's supervisors, team managers, all the way up, if you are in an industrial setting then the value stream manager, even the plant manager if they're not the value stream manager, they have to be involved. They have to hold people accountable and make it work.

Joe: In your book you talk about training with TWI, Training within Industry a lot. Do you think that's an old tool? Is that still applicable today?

Mark: Yes, it's definitely an old tool. It's kind of the classic U.S. approach. We develop something really cool. And the training within the industry was really World War II, the three programs (job methods, job relations, and job instructions) for a supervisor. And it was a major process, maybe even call it a system, by which we increased and improved our productivity during World War II, as a lot of the working folk that were making stuff were overseas fighting. So, the new workforce really found this extremely helpful. Within that was job methods, one of the three, and that gets into really...in that situation it was the supervisors that were doing this.

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In Kaizen, we do this together as a team. We go through this journey, but really direct observation. Not to oversimplify here, job methods talks about eliminating, combining, rearranging, and simplifying the processes. We do that. Then, after World War II we exported it to Japan, who was in a pretty tough situation, and we forget about it all.

So, there's the job methods piece and then there is the job instruction piece which, when we have a standard work, is an excellent tool by which we can help train people so that they really understand, hands-on, what the new standard work or standardized work really is and what the key points are.

Joe: When you are really looking at sustainability you're looking at implementing standard work, implementing the correct training within the TWI type approach of implementation. Its' new, and that's what will sustain the product. With the different PDCA cycles and...

Mark: The lean management systems are extremely important. So a great reference will be David Mann's book, "Creating A Lean Culture." He just came out with his second edition. An excellent reference for folks to look at. You've got to make that system your own. It requires a huge cultural shift throughout the organization, not the least of which is the managers themselves, because, many times, they understand standard work is for people doing the work. But, guess what: standard work is also for the leaders, especially around the SPCA, the Standardized Do Check Act.

And another thing for sustainability too, you should have post event audits to make sure that the Kaizen newspaper, kind of those left over todos, have been executed. Over and above kind of lean management system to make sure to make sure stuff has been closed

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out properly. There's a bunch of different things that can be done, but those are some very straightforward, basic, but not easy things that should be done to ensure sustainability.

Joe: I think about Six Sigma, the DMAIC process; they spend a lot of time with a control section and what to do about that. When I see people in Lean, I don't see as much emphasis placed on that, which is really the sustainability portion of it. Do I read that wrong or am I mistaken about that?

Mark: Well, I think your observation is correct about people are not being very good at the sustainability side, and I've got a Six Sigma black belt, so I certainly understand the DMAIC process. So, the way it's taught is proper, the way of Lean, the way it's taught, is proper. It really falls down to people's understanding, ownership, leadership, that the control phase that SPCA phase is really where people don't do it. It is hard; there is a rigor; it never goes away. So if you think about a leader standard of work, as you develop essentially new systems: new standard of work, new linkages between process use, again, as aided in telling normal versus abnormal bi-visual controls. It's something that is continuously developing as you make improvements and expand and develop the system.

Because most systems are driven, managed by humans, that means they're going to decay quite quickly unless you ensure the standards are being followed and making sure they're sufficient. And if they're not sufficient, obviously we have an opportunity to do further improvements.

Obviously this is not to say that standards are locked in forever. That gets back into the principle-driven Kaizen. We should follow the standard of work until we make improvements, and that becomes the new standard of work. And I think if we got back into

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the core principles of Lean, this notion of sustainability and approach for doing it, it's there. One of my jokes is: "We got some folks out there practicing lean without a license."

We learn by doing but what happens, a lot of times, people go through a Kaizen process, Kaizen events, and they won't do really well on sustainability. So guess what? Next time someone talks about doing a Kaizen event, it's like, "Uh, those don't work."

The folks that you pulled in and worked real hard and had a great time developing improved process use think back, and they go, "Hey, I spent 50, 60 hours that week. I worked my tail off, and you guys didn't sustain anything. Your leaders didn't hold anybody accountable. You guys didn't follow through, why would I want to do another Kaizen event?"

Joe: I think that goes back to a little bit, Mark, and expand on that while we talk about sustainability here. As Kaizen and Lean have taken hold in the professional services and office environment and health care, you pull a lot of people into a Kaizen event to make it successful but there's not necessarily a leader. When you're on the shop floor or on a manufacturing floor there is a real structure on how to implement that Kaizen event, already a structure on how you're going to implement something. In Healthcare, everybody has different bosses and different commitments. In Six Sigma, you've always got that black belt or green belt. There's a structure there. And in Lean, after a Kaizen event, I'm not sure I understand the structure. Is that an observation that's way off base or is that correct?

Mark: Well I think in Six Sigma you have black belts, certainly, there for the project to shepherd it through and facilitate the main process, but again, in the end, they still go

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away. They still go off into another project; their focus gets diverted. There should be, in Lean and in any type of thing, be owners of the process. When we look at the Kaizen event from a pre-event planning perspective, even if we go before that, the strategic portion with strategy deployment or the value stream analysis, you want to identify a value stream manager: an accountable being who's going to drive that value stream improvement plan and execute that and also achieve the measurable targets. If you don't have that, it's very difficult to be successful in Lean.

When we're talking about Kaizen events, it's the team leaders, the co-leaders; they're obviously very important people. They play very important roles in the Kaizen event itself. Often the team leader, you don't want them to be directly from the area because there might be some bias introduced. But certainly the co-leader should live in that area, and they should be helping to sustain.

My rule of thumb in picking teams, so you want them a third from within the process, a third split between upstream and downstream and a third roughly, fresh eyes.

So you should have at least a third of the folks that participate in the Kaizen Event be residents, people within the process after the event. So they have a responsibility to kind of evangelize and support and help sustain.

So that's a major element. Now I think you hit the nail on the head, certainly from a health care perspective - totally different culture. They're not trained to think in terms of process owners, or more appropriately, value stream owners.

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If you look at a physician they're largely focused, even if they're site chief for example, I mean if they're practicing medicine, if they have a full panel on it, they'll worry primarily about their panel. They work with their natural work team which is their nurse and medical assistant and so on and so forth. They're not used to managing off the system and holding people accountable for process performance and a process adherence perspective.

So the culture needs to change. There's new language, and new disciplines that need to get introduced into that culture, and it's not easy. It can be done. There are folks out there who are doing it well, but it's definitely hard.

Transactional stuff, on the continuum I think it's probably in the middle of where healthcare is and the industrial side. But that's not to say even the industrial folks get this right.

Joe: I want to get back to your book because there are three different areas I really wanted to touch upon. I found it very interesting that when you took a look at the book, you broke it down, I think, into three parts. But the interesting thing is the biggest part and the part that you spent the time on was the standard work. You explained the follow through and the execution of it. Did you do that intentionally?

Mark: What, to spend the bulk of the book on the standard workpiece?

Joe: Yeah, well large parts of it, yes.

Mark: Right, right. Yes. I mean, I think back to when I started learning from a Lean Sensei, and that was 1994, '95. I just remember sitting at his elbow, following him

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everywhere, listening to everything he said, and jotting stuff down. I had a ton of notes. And I thought, "I've been through a few Kaizen events now, I think I know how to do this." Right, that was really off. Then I go in the next Kaizen event with my Sensei, and I'm like, "Oh, I thought that step two was this." I found pretty quickly that it's a lot deeper than that. There's definitely underlying principles that you always need to maintain and sustain. There is standard work, but at the same time, it's kind of a loose type fit, although there are some things that you definitely can't mess up on.

So, for example, definitely your Kaizen events need to be pulled, right? You can't just be pushing them on folks. The old tool-driven Kaizen, they have to matter, and they should be tied. Like I said before, diametric analysis or A-tree or process improvement plans or whatever, there needs to be a context there.

You need to pre-plan, easy for me to say, properly. So we talked about team selection, and we talked about scope and targets and so on and so forth. We talk about logistics, communication, which people end up messing up time and time again. Just think in terms of, "Hey, the more effective people are, the more intense, the more frequent, and the more personal the communication needs to be."

One of the major things I talk about in the book from a lean leaders perspective, they should be doing the change management thing. There are some great models out there like Carter's model of change management that we seem to just kind of forget. Maybe because it's so simple, we just kind of blow it off, I don't know.

But now we get to the actual Kaizen event, and we're talking about things like kick-off meetings. We're talking about a healthy alignment team leader meetings, plus delta

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analyzes. Very quick things each morning to really find out what's working well for the team and what could be improved relative to work strategy and communication and things like that.

And then there's a kind of storyline that's inherent in the Kaizen event itself that follows that kind of plan, do, check, act. And if we process and if we get off of it, we're really at risk of cause jumping, of implementing unnecessary stuff. It would definitely be in the category of waste or muda. So we're training people how to think from a plan, do, check, act perspective as well as introducing them to standardize, do, check, act.

We expect to make significant improvements at a Kaizen Event, but we're also trying to engage and develop the workforce at the same time.

For us to kind of bastardize the process by, not following standard work that we should be following in a Kaizen event, we're teaching them incorrectly. We're teaching them bad habits. When we try to get to that daily Kaizen type of phase in our organization, it's going to be really hard.

There are things that we need to follow. And there are certain tools for direct observation. There's not observation forms really, spaghetti charts, the application of effect diagrams and histograms and things like that. We're not super prescriptive: "Here's a checklist you're going to do A, B, C, D, E. You're going to do these forms for this one and this in every Kaizen event." They're different. Sometimes you're going to do process mapping to get an understanding of the current reality, so on and so forth.

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So I really wanted people to understand what that standard work is and what it means. It also gets into things like work strategy. This book is largely written for those people in the Kaizen Promotion Office. Those people who help facilitate this process, as well as Lean leaders; they need to understand how important this is to moving up that curve from a tool driven to a system driven to a principle-driven Kaizen culture.

Lastly, is the follow-ups piece. We have to have rigor on that, and if we get sloppy, we end up wasting our time, unfortunately.

Joe: The first thing that I noticed about the book was it was spiral bound. And the question I'm going to ask you is: "Why is it called a field book?" My Perception of it was the fact that when I look at this spiral bound, to me, that seemed initially that there is a field book. That was my first inclination because I can open the thing up, can fold it around and lay it next to me. I don't have to read it. I can put it next to me and use it. It just jumped out at me as a field book, and that was the reason I picked it up. I mean someone had it, and I went over and looked at it because it just struck me. Why did you write a field book and what gives you the right to call it a field book, I guess?

Mark: Very good questions. The first thing I want to say is I've got three children and they all looked at it, and they all go, "It's not a real book if it's got the spiral." I had the option to go with a hardcover but I hoped that people would bring it along, make it dog-eared, write in the margins, although the margins are dead, but write all over it and use it. There's definitely the lay-flat applicability to it. Might have been sexier looking had it been hardcover but I think the spiral bound is the way to go. Why did I write it? Part of it was explained before. I was at the elbow of the Sensei trying to record how do you do this,

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really looking for a cookbook. It's not a cookbook by any stretch, but what I wanted to do was communicate how to plan, execute, and follow through in Kaizen events effectively.

Have effective Kaizen events and within that context of Lean business system, have Lean leaders understand what they have to do to make this thing work and how to develop the Lean function, the Kaizen promotion office.

That's really why I wrote it, selfishly; I'm sick of explaining this stuff to people. I'd rather have them focus on truly implementing Lean and Kaizen events are really a vehicle to do that. I'd rather people get an understanding of the vehicle, so think of it maybe as a car. I want you to learn how to drive the car so we can get somewhere.

Joe: Because, like I said, the spiral bound books always catch my eyes because I think of books as using them. I learned a long time ago; I'm trying to think who...It was in the book an author who said the highest compliment, that an author can ever receive, is to see one of his books looking like a rag with dog-eared pages and written in margins and underlined. That's the greatest compliment you can give someone. And I never understand because the spiral bound book lends itself so much to do that, where the others don't. They're more pristine. I want to use them on the shop floor; I want to carry them into a meeting. I've always preferred that, that always catches my eye when I see them.

Gemba Tales is the name of your blog. How did you use Gemba Tales within your book, though?

Mark: Well, there's almost 40 Gemba Tales. They're little stories that are interest first throughout the book. I wanted people to see or get a feel for real-life applications;

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sometimes successful, sometimes unsuccessful. Give it a more human feel. Also, a book completely on Lean and Kaizen can be pretty darn dry. The Lean community is a great community. It's full of people who are willing to share and mentor others and along with it was a great opportunity to have some folks, some really good, knowledgeable teachers, sensei's, to kind of share some of their experiences. So, about half of them are stuff that I've picked up over the years. The other half is what some of my colleges have learned over the years.

So, that's kind of what it is. I took that name, and the principle behind that and developed the Gemba Tales blog, which is about three and a half months old right now. It's doing pretty well, and I'm having a lot of fun with that.

Joe: It looks interesting. I viewed it recently and looked at a few things and found it interesting. It's a good one to subscribe to. It's not like you're getting two blog posts a day. You do it like twice a week, and there's good writing, good information that you're putting up there. Now, can you tell me anything you would like to add to this conversation that maybe I left out?

Mark: Well, one thing that I think we have to talk a little bit about is the Kaizen promotion office, otherwise known as the Lean Function, or Operational Excellence, OpEx group, or Just in Time Promotion Office. It goes by a bunch of different names. But it's very important if you want a Kaizen- ready enterprise or business. To have resources, typically dedicated resources -, and we're not talking a lot. I think the rule of thumb is one or two percent of your total population - that are there to help train folks in Lean, and Six Sigma, continuous improvement types of stuff.

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Hopefully, develop a curriculum around the Lean Business system and facilitate Kaizen events. They can do the big Kaizen events but they can also facilitate the daily Kaizen activities, whether it's centered around helping support the suggestion system or facilitating and training others to facilitate Kaizen circle activities, so on and so forth.

These folks should be really reporting into Lean leaders. It's not a figurehead type of position. It should be extremely low bureaucracy, meaning that there really shouldn't be any empires here. So you could have maybe one corporate KPO depending on the size of the organization. Different value streams depending on their critical mass might have one or more folks.

If you consider these groups as the minor leagues of your company where you're developing the talents, so this should be the rising stars. If you're truly committed to Lean as a business system and approach, this would be an excellent training ground.

Certainly, you want to have certain core competencies that these people would have, as well as technical skills. Now, if you're just starting the journey, they're going to have to develop. So they're going to have to have the technical aptitude. They're obviously going to have to be extremely curious, intellectually curious and they have to be change agents.

It's an extremely important role to help drive this change and help change the culture. Try not to fall into the trap of doing part time KPO's. Usually what ends up happening is, well, lean implantation is important and people don't always see it as urgent. So, if their particular role is to make sure that the plant doesn't run out of critical supplies or materials, guess what they're going to be focusing on?

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We can't overlook that. Lastly, Lean leadership. This stuff does not work, will never work, if you don't have effective Lean leaders. So, that's one of the reasons why there's a whole chapter. Chapter 3, I believe, if I can remember this. Chapter 3, we're covering the roles of the Lean leader especially in the context of Kaizen.

Joe: I would like to finish up by thanking you very much Mark. I appreciate the conversation, especially you spending the time with sustainability, which I think is really, really important. Mark can be found at Kaizenfieldbook.com or his blog, Gembatales.com. The podcast will be available on my iTunes and on my blog and my podcast site.

Mark: Joe, thank you. I really appreciate it. Take care.

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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.

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