



Ideal Behaviors Drive Ideal Results



Bob Halloran and Paul Arthur both went through Lean Fundamentals and Visual Workplace Management training with Haley & Aldrich.

The construction industry has seen a huge increase in Lean being used as an approach to improve project delivery. According to the Lean Construction Institute, projects with Lean applied consistently are three times more likely to finish ahead of schedule and two times more likely to finish under budget. But despite the results, many organizations are slow to implement Lean. There are many one-off events, a handful of project success stories, and even fewer true Integrated Project Delivery (IPD) projects. Why aren't more people practicing Lean project delivery?

Learning and implementing a new tool is easy but practicing and sustaining a new behavior is hard. A majority of the focus in our industry has been on "doing Lean tools" instead of "being Lean" with the right behaviors, and the reality is, *ideal results require ideal behaviors.*

Imagine if we could make Lean behaviors more tangible, more practical and be able to put them to work in our everyday operations? What if practicing Lean behaviors improved relationships amongst teams and yielded better performance?

Focusing only on performance outcomes won't get us the results we want

What an organization measures tells a lot about how it will perform. Cost and schedule are good measures of project outcomes, but they are lagging metrics that don't give us the right information about how the project is performing in time for us to intervene and adjust our actions. We need leading indicators too: measures during the project delivery process that tell us whether we're on track to achieve a desired outcome. If we measure them early enough, we have time to intervene, solve the problems getting in the way and achieve our goals.

Project teams that measure leading indicators, such as planned percent complete are doing a good job checking in on the process for obstacles and adjusting before it's too late. But often it's behaviors that cause obstacles. **Teams incorporating Lean project delivery approaches such as A3 thinking and Last Planner System® know very well that these approaches just don't work without team members exhibiting specific behaviors; it's the combination of Lean tools and behaviors that make them achieve desired outcomes of on time and on budget.**

Getting inspiration from the Shingo Model

Shigeo Shingo is one of the cofounders of the Toyota Production System and developed a model for operational excellence. In *The Shingo Model for Operational Excellence*, the authors describe Shingo's vision: "When people understand more deeply the why behind the how and the what, they become empowered to innovate and take individual initiative." The Shingo Model provides four guidelines on how to drive ideal behaviors:

- **Lead with humility.** This means go to *gemba* (where the work happens) and seek to understand the perspective of people doing the work. Being vulnerable and welcoming input from all members of a team, regardless of seniority. **The leader must set the tone for this behavior by paying due regard to every team member's perspective, struggles, and ideas, from the office to the field, and back.**
- **Align around a common purpose and hold everyone accountable to it.** Whether it's a problem statement, a project objective, or a target condition, we seek to rally a team around a common purpose. When team members come together from different organizations and trades to develop this "true north" together, they develop their shared purpose to rely on when problems emerge.
- **Respect and empower everyone involved in a project.** Challenge people by engaging in a back and forth dialogue about their problems, root causes, and possible solutions. This behavior prevents us from jumping to solutions based on what worked on a past project or someone's preferred method, and instead requires that we gather data from people who know the true causes of the problems.
- **Commit to continuous improvement as a team.** Any users of A3 thinking and the Plan-Do-Check-Adjust cycle understand that a high-performing project team is measured by the speed with which they learn together, not individually. **Projects using Last Planner System® and a "big room" use the space to be transparent, vulnerable, build trust, problem-solve together and reinforce these positive behaviors at a regular cadence.**

By practicing these behaviors, individuals feel better about the work, teams and projects perform better, and the results are an *outcome*. We can learn from the example of J&M Brown,

an ASM member. J&M Brown is a 450-person electrical contractor serving the Boston market since its founding in 1921. In 2017 they embarked on a Lean journey to identify ways they could get the work done more effectively, with less waste and rework and to collaborate better as a team.

Bob Halloran was one of the people who went through training in Lean approaches and visual management techniques. He needed to find a way to improve J&M Brown's CAD coordination process, which was not keeping up with the install process, causing rework, lost time, a less than happy CAD team and a concerned General Contractor. As a Project Manager, he had to understand what the nature of the problems were facing the CAD team and get them to open up, without coming across as an outsider.

Halloran used the Lean approach of the A3 process to define the purpose and needed value that everyone could rally around. He gathered data about the current state by going to *gemba* to talk with the CAD team about what was getting in their way. Without having to understand the software, Halloran was able to get them talking about their obstacles. Halloran said, "By showing respect by sitting down with them and asking them what problems they were facing, they opened up. You couldn't believe the lists they made of all the problems they were having! They had too many things on their plate – they were changing ink cartridges and programming software. Now we've got other people supporting those non-core tasks and it's really helping them out. We also identified they needed training in certain areas. Now the whole CAD team is going through the training they need together."

Halloran identified the leading indicators that would make a difference in the outcome: leveling the work, ensuring the team had the right training to do the work required, and creating a shared understanding of the project's purpose and status by using visual management.

The results are telling: his project team experiences less rework, fewer delays, and the CAD team is now in time with or ahead of the install process, creating accurate drawings for people in the field to use. They're responding more quickly to requests with less overburden. And their customer is more



Visual representation of Bob Halloran's project progress on the job. Easy to understand and color-coded showing steps completed in process.

confident they are doing the work that will help ensure the outcomes of on-time and on-budget.

Halloran reflected and said, "**I couldn't see why things were happening. Through the A3 process, it opened up the opportunity to ask questions, and now I see what's causing problems and how we can help. Solving things visually has taken such a load off my mind. Now when we take people on a tour, we explain what they'll see using visual management – what's roughed in, what's ready to go up. This puts everybody at ease, including the GC, and gives people a good feeling of what's going on.**"

The positive benefits of taking a Lean approach has spread: J&M Brown is also applying what they learned in Lean training to make huge improvements to their warehouse, prefab and shipping and receiving departments.

Regardless of your organization's size or experience with Lean, you can start to practice ideal behaviors to get more of the ideal results you're seeking, and measure more than outcomes:

- **Lead with humility.** Go to the *gemba*, show respect, and ask what's getting in the way of people doing their best work.
- **As a group, collaborate to identify your team's "true north" and leading indicators.** Get the office and the field to participate equally in defining a shared purpose and how the team will track success. Choose a few, simple leading indicators

(measures) that show both the behaviors and process are on the right track.

- **Respect and empower everyone involved in a project.** Encourage everyone regardless of their status or role on the job to challenge the status quo. And thank them for their contributions!
- **Make problem-solving and continuous improvement an ongoing, transparent process.** If you are a member of the team, tell your truth by sharing your concerns about what could get in the way of achieving the shared purpose, and offer up your own ideas. Use an A3, idea boards and dashboards to show visually how the team is doing.

Lean isn't a checklist of things, a set of tools or an event; it's a way of thinking and being. Being Lean provides the opportunity to inject respect for people into daily operations. We can take a step by asking a question instead of telling someone what to do. We can show respect and get everyone on a job to contribute to better team and project performance. If each of us did one thing differently to model ideal behaviors – from the field to the office and back – we'd collectively be able to integrate Lean approaches into more projects and achieve better outcomes. ▲



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