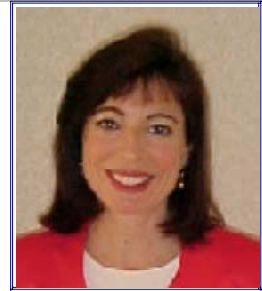




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## Performance Improvements in a Decentralized Organization



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As 'lean' professionals we use six sigma, kaizen, poke yoke, kanban, 5S and a range of other initiatives to identify and seize performance improvements. In this article we're going to look at strategies for winning support for performance improvement initiatives, and how we help ensure the success of our initiatives through good learning and roll-out strategy design.

### Case study – TPM at consumer goods manufacturer

Our client is a major manufacturer of consumer goods products. Like many organizations they have a manufacturing excellence group within head office that focus on performance improvement. Comprised of four senior level 'lean' practitioners, this group is charged with invigorating and supporting manufacturing performance improvement across the company's dozens of manufacturing facilities worldwide.

Against this background the manufacturing excellence team leader contacted Talsico to ask us to quote on creating a company-specific training program. Our client explained that their previous use of a generic program was not successful and that they were looking for a new approach to the design of their training programs.

### Our client's existing training strategy looked like this:



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1. they got continuous improvement (CI) personnel from each plant to

2. come to a regional train-the-trainer program in the limited time available (five days) they spent three days running the CI group through the generic program and two days in a facilitator 'train-the-trainer' session. As some attendees remarked this was like 'turning the information fire-hose on them')
3. they tested the CI group to ensure they grasped the concepts of the course and could teach the program (which they passed)
4. the CI people (who were pumped up about the potential of what they learned) gave the class glowing reviews
5. our clients sent the CI people back to their plants with course materials, a facilitator guide and the goal of running this program within three months of their return

#### » So what happened back at the Plants?

Nothing. In fact, so much nothing happened that the manufacturing excellence group become alarmed. Surveys conducted three months after the courses showed that less than 20% of attendees had run the program at their facility, and when those who had run the program were asked what results they had achieved, the majority answered along the lines of:

*'Things are going slow right now due to production problems'*  
and  
*'They liked it, but everybody has a lot on their plate right now'*

#### » What went wrong?

Was it the facilitator? Was it the material? Was the course poorly written?

The facilitator was excellent and the course was well-written. Indeed our client had already identified the only problem with the course material and that was that it was too generic. No, the primary problems with the program were inherent in the company's learning and roll-out strategies — these critical strategies did not support the successful adoption of new behaviors.

Let's look at some of the issues that challenged our manufacturing excellence group.

#### » Learning strategy issues:

**1. Focus on behaviors** — it's all well and good to talk about TPM, Kaizen or 5s, but what do you want me to do? How does it apply to my filling machine? Some of what you're teaching me about quick changeover conflicts with what we've learned in the previous courses, which should I follow? These are all valid concerns when courses are too theoretical, generic or general.

As we design learning programs it is critical that we keep in mind that what we are after is verifiable behaviors, and it is the sustained use of these behaviors that results in the performance improvements we seek. So a good learning strategy should start with the big picture, then quickly drill down to focus on learning, reinforcing and assessing concrete behaviors.

**2. How do I learn my job?** — let's assume you want your operators to practice TPM — if I was hired as a new production worker would I learn TPM behaviors as an integral part of learning 'my job' (e.g. how to run the line I've been assigned to) or would I first learn my job, then later learn TPM?

The answer to this question indicates how successful we've been in taking TPM from an improvement initiative to an assimilated behavior that an accepted part of each employee's job. This is an important concept. Our employees must not think of 'the job' as simply operating the line. We need to ensure that 'the job' includes safety as it relates to the job, quality as it relates to the job, TPM as it relates to the job, reporting as it relates to the

relates to the job, then as it relates to the job, reporting as it relates to the job and so on.

**3. Not everybody is at the same starting point** — knowledge levels and implementation practices vary from plant to plant, from line to line and team to team. It is important that the learning structure be flexible enough to cater for these differences thus providing learning that is appropriate and challenging.

» **Roll-out strategy issues:**

1. The weak link in the roll-out strategy for the TPM initiative was its dependency on the plant CI person. This is where the wheels came off the cart. More often than not the plant CI role was a part-time responsibility within an otherwise full-time job. Our client's roll-out strategy depended on this person taking this initiative back to the plant, selling the management team on making it a priority, organizing and running the course (multiple times), shepherding the initiative on each line and measuring the results, easily several months work. And, of course all of this assumed that the CI person didn't have other more pressing responsibilities.

2. Another issue in the roll-out was how to lock in the performance improvements. Our client was experienced enough to know that temporary improvements in performance have a tendency to backslide unless you're able to 'lock them in'. Their challenge was to accomplish this in a decentralized environment where they have no on-going physical presence.

» **How did we resolve these issues?**

By focusing on strategy: The trap that our client fell into was that they put too much focus on the course. While the quality of your course and instructor are important, the most important factors in determining the successful implementation of your improvement initiatives are your learning strategy and roll-out strategy (this holds true in both centralized and decentralized environments). If these two strategies haven't been given careful consideration and testing, you can run the best course in the world and still fail.

By focusing on the learning and roll-out strategies we were able to provide our client with a framework for integrating learning with on-the-job performance that has proven effective across a range of topics and environments.

For more information on how to improve your learning and roll-out strategies talk to your nearest Talsico representative or e-mail us at [learning@talsico.com](mailto:learning@talsico.com)

Simply click on this link [www.talsico.com](http://www.talsico.com) and we'll have you creating 'useful' procedures that truly improve individual and organizational performance.

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