

Welcome everyone to the Washington State Government Lean for Dummies book review. I'm Darrell Damron with the Governor's office. Each week we review one chapter of the book, Lean for Dummies, as you can see from our schedule, we will finish the last chapter of the book next Wednesday.

As you can also see from the schedule, we have a special guest joining us each week and this week I am pleased to introduce Holly Valkama. She is in the studio with me today so it will be a great session. Thank you for joining us.

Holly: Sure.

Darrell: A reminder for everyone, we record the sessions and we post the recordings on the website. The link is in the Prezi. The Prezi is available 24/7 so you can watch the recorded sessions or navigate the Prezi on your own if you would like to watch the material from previous weeks.

Remember the purpose of the book reviews is to help you understand about Lean so you are ready to participate in Lean activities in your agency.

During the WebEx session, we will put everyone on mute to control the background noise, if it goes off, push your mute button again, and if you want to send in a question, please use the chat feature and make sure the drop down menu is going to everyone so we can all see what you are submitting in terms of questions or comments.

If you haven't already, please do the poll question, type in the city where you are right now and the number of people participating in the book review at your location. It has been a privilege and fascinating to have about 600 state employees participate in the book review. If you would like to look at the course information, in terms of objectives and facilitators and how we go about it, you can see that in the Prezi. I will slide us out to this week's content. Chapters 17, 18, 19 make up part six. The last part of the book and each chapter presents a list of 10. Last week, chapter 17 looked at the 10 best practices. Today's session is chapter 18, 10 pitfalls to avoid. Next week we will finish up the book with chapter 19, 10 places to go for help. Here is the table of contents for this week's chapter. Chapter 18, 10 pitfalls to avoid. Table of contents is the list of the pitfalls. 10+1.

Let's get into the key points for today's chapter.

The first key point or pitfall to avoid the book calls, shiny objects. As many of you experienced in your careers, new improvement ideas and tools show up all the time and like shiny objects that flash in the sunlight and catch your attention, it's easy to get distracted by other approaches that show up in the workplace.

Fundamental methodology, and Lean thinking and tools form a holistic and complete system that proves effective in every industry and has been embraced over the last 60 years from auto manufacturing to healthcare to government.

To avoid this pitfall we need to be thoughtful of how we integrate other improvement methods into tools would Lean. Holly, would or can you share your experience?

Holly: If I'm going to speak to when I ran a global manufacturing organizations because there is a lot of methodology that come into the manufacturing sector and people can see the application. I can tell you from my experience that Lean is a toolkit and a way of thinking that everybody can use.

It has master black belt, sigma type projects for those tend to be surgical applications and requires a sophisticated skill set versus Lean can really be something that anybody learns how to use them from my experience, when you can employ all of your people, and for you it is 20,000 people, when you have that many people coming to work every day thinking about how to do their work differently and eliminate waste, you have to ask yourself should I be putting the focus somewhere else if I don't have all 20,000 looking at that work that way today? I would question whether you call it a level of your implementation and cultural was part of Lean before you start looking at other methodologies.

Darrell: Ideally, depending on how you count, state government has somewhere in the neighborhood of 60,000.

All trying to get together on alignment to afford shiny objects. Let's go on to the next pitfall to avoid, the mentality that says, this is just not for us?

The reality is that some people don't want to change especially when their experience at work was that change wasn't done to them instead of them being involved in the shaping. Many people have heard of Lean but they often think Lean applies to manufacturing but of course as well document that Lean thinking and tools improve value it delivers to customers.

To avoid this pitfall we need to help people understand that Lean thinking and tools are the right things to use. We need to help them understand that by using these tools, they will realize benefits for customers which and also realize benefits for employees at every level because when we get rid of the overburdened and variation in waste there is a tremendous boost in the employee's quality of life at work. Holly, any comments on this pitfall?

Holly: This is the avoidance of the pitfall is a response to a particular cause for why you might be hearing the resistance or thinking resistance. Within the organizational change work we say resistance is a data point.

Which means, you have to get to the root cause. Your response with avoidance can be one of them, it means you need to understand where somebody is coming from relative to their resistance and address it based on whatever that root causes and hopefully is it simple as integrating or understanding or showing them the benefits for them personally.

Darrell: Thank you. The next pitfall to avoid is, complacency. Changing our behavior is hard. Many people have a hard time making and seeing how making small incremental changes will help. Many people want to continue working the broken process and hoping a fix will come along instead of making little improvements every day.

To avoid this pitfall, we need to help people see the results that other units are achieving by communicating the stories of things happening around state government. And help people understand how changes will satisfy customers. How does what you are doing in terms of improvement, how will it make a difference for Washingtonians or the next person you are handing stuff off to? We need to help people create performance measures that reinforce Lean thinking and behaviors. Holly, what do you think about this complacency pitfall?

Holly: Potentially, another form of resistance. I would talk about your performance management system. When we start to embed Lean thinking into key systems in the organization like performance management, like you're on board, like the hiring process, all of those send a message that this is something that is getting embedded into key systems in the organization and that complacent person is needed to think twice because it isn't something they can ignore because it will be part of their work and in the organization.

Darrell: Right now, Gov. [inaudible] and the executive team are absolutely working on the performance measures in that system and how we pay attention to moving the needle there is exciting things happening on that channel we will hear about throughout state government in the coming weeks. Let's move to the next pitfall to avoid, same old, same old, senior managers. There will be leaders who tried to go on living the same old way but all leaders need to fully embrace Lean and that is the point. It includes making improvements to their own work as leaders in our organization and participating in leading improvement efforts and of course, going to the actual place where the work happens as part of the daily management discipline. To avoid this pitfall, you need to help all leaders understand and develop commitment to using Lean thinking and tools throughout our enterprise and state government. Holly, what advice do you have for avoiding pitfall of some leaders staying stuck in the same old behavior?

Holly: I think one of them is that the executive leadership be visible in their actions and their words and terms of, this is a strategy that intends to be called in the state of Washington and there is no option. You guys have had sessions on the key role of leadership so by having focus at the very top declared this is the path. It does not give other managers who aren't as onboard with it. It does not give them any options. So at some point, my experience is that people will opt out. If this is not an environment they feel comfortable managing and, they will learn this isn't where they are happy and can be effective and they will move on. The organization will go down the Lean journey.

Darrell: Fortunately, for us in state government, our Gov. is absolutely clear that Lean thinking and tools are what we are using to improve and deliver results to Washingtonians.

Holly: To share an example of this from my past, I didn't create this design but it played out. It happened early on and a journey. Had to any fracturing locations who were each starting the Lean journey at the exact same time using the same resources and methodology to come into that organization. If you fast forward 18 months down the road, one of those organizations just ran forward and ultimately ended up winning a nationally recognized prize for the work they did. The other organization did okay and continued to exist but never had the same momentum or set the same roots the other organization did.

Having a birds eye view, I could not help seeing this transpire in front of me, so I started asking myself, why do we have one over here and not over there? When I looked at it, I looked at the organization doing phenomenal work and it was because they started with strong management who embraced it, who early on instituted the [inaudible] what they were looking at. They started to change behavior knowing they would eventually fill in the blanks but they were more than willing to change behavior because they wanted what the prize so to speak was that Lean promised in terms of all the enrichment that comes to their organization along with what it delivers for the business. There's lots of great stories about when senior managers do and organization will follow.

Darrell: I can't tell you how many times I have heard that from private-sector partners. That leadership has to be demonstrating it and making it real otherwise the ultimate transformation and value to customers will not happen. Thanks to that advice, that is awesome. Let's move on to the next pitfall, stuck in the middle again. Mid-level leaders that often get stuck in the middle are asked by the executives above them to launch new initiatives and getting increases in productivity and other various ways. At the same time, first level supervisors and employees below them on the work chart are resisting the new things because their plates are full of the last five new things they were piling onto their work. To avoid this pitfall we need to equip leaders to find their own solutions to problems and mid-level leaders can be guides that listen to employees and clear the obstacles that get in the way of improvements. Holly, what would you share about this, stuck in the middle, pitfall.

Holly: I have it from two different angles. It is in the Lean journey one of the most difficult issues to help middle level leaders through. For anybody on the phone, who reports to a mid-level leader, and you see the value of Lean, let me encourage you to thank your manager or supervisor. Thank them for their support and that you appreciate their support of Lean. That goes a long way to get those managers be additional energy they need to continue to change how they do work.

Mid-level managers, as you know, it are being asked to redefine value for yourself by no longer a problem solver and you are back to rewarded when you aren't probably miss solving the problem you are coaching and developing your people. Hopefully, as you hear the words of encouragement and words of thanks from your employees, you will start to see how that value is a very rewarding value added is a big part of why we have chosen a leadership role, continue down that path.

Darrell: I see comments on the chat here, all managers should be required to read Chapter 13 in the Lean for Dummies book. That was on management tools and understanding strategy and not just chapter 13, but the entire book. As we're all learning on the journey. I love your comment about saying thank you and taking the time to talk to senior leaders about thanking them for what they are doing and opening up a conversation and whole concept of respect for people is critical and you see it in every book, all the literature, 60 years of Lean being played out the organizations. That is a core component we all need to practice and get better at and demonstrate. Up and down the organization. From the top to the bottom, left to right. Let's go on to the next pitfall, it's a quick fix. Some folks thinks Lean is a quick fix that will get us through the budget crisis or some problem the agencies [inaudible] for the organization. Also, many think all we have to do is get a bunch of those Lean projects done and the crisis will be over and problem will be solved. To avoid this pitfall we need to use the Lean thinking and a long-term solution to create a culture of employees who continuously improve. Holly, have you seen as quick fix mentality and companies you have worked with?

Holly: It is sad but I have. When people are looking for the quick fix, they forget the thinking and behavior change the cause all they want are to reduce this, numbers so to speak. The story I have bear, is if you will stay focused on the incremental changes, if you will stay with that, then you really do have the solution it is just out a ways. I was talking with one of my older managers on the journey, a plant manager in a small town in Virginia, and they started the journey in 2004. They are the largest employer in a small town in Virginia and I was talking with him in 2010 and getting an update on what had been going on in the plant in recent times. In the course of that sharing, he said, Holly, it was so hard in the beginning. It would have been so easy to let folks go back to how they did it. This gentleman had managed the plant through the entire period and said, but here is what everybody recognizes is that this plant would not have survived the recession if we had not done the work we did starting back in 2004. So even though was lots of little changes, it was years and years they stuck with it. So when they needed the silver bullet which was to make it through the recession, it was sitting right there for them. All this planning builds the rainy day fund because it will be a long-term solution if you will just live with it, all the pains and change management issues in the short term.

Darrell: Very good. Let's look at the next pitfall, cherry picking. A common mistake the organization take is trying to apply Lean tools in a piecemeal fashion whether it's value stream mapping or your small set of Lean tools. The idea is that the organization selects a few tools that will help solve problems and focus on just using those tools for everything rather than understanding of Lean thinking behind all the tools. We can and we will in state government use Lean thinking to make improvements and change the way we operate and every area of state government. We need to commit to using Lean thinking and tools at all levels in every branch of government every agency every board and commission and every unit and job throughout state government.

Holly, how important is this idea of committing to using Lean thinking throughout the organization?

Holly: Obviously, I am a proponent of it and as I thought about what I might add to the conversation, I think this needs to have the balance of more is not necessarily better. We want excellence in everything we deploy your we don't want just to throw out to the organization value stream mapping and [inaudible] and say we have to do at all or else we will fall into this pit.

Darrell: Good. Use the tools now,

Holly: Right. And you do nothing well. There needs to be thoughtful implementation planning and rollout planning and part of that is a natural progression in how we grab hold of the thinking and tools and make sure we are allowing people the time and learning opportunities to deploy those tools so they can be connected to the thinking. I changed the value stream format for administrative processes a couple years ago cause I realized that was missing something and the only reason that happened was the thinking was clear enough I could see the tool lacked visibility on a certain element. The tool is not what we are driving home. We are driving home the thinking and if you don't give people the time to deploy and practice it, those tools will just be not well connected to thinking or adapted in ways that are helpful to the organization.

A balance here of making sure you are giving your organization time to learn how to use the tool and the thinking that leads behind a tool.

Darrell: That's not easy. It's hard to do. There's pressure to perform and learn and get it figured out and go fast. Great advice. Slow it down and practice. The next pitfall is, playing a shell game. It's not Lean to move waste from one process to another and when we don't work together or don't have the entire value stream and view it is easy to make improvements in one area that show up as waste in other areas. The reality is everything and the value stream is connected and all organizations are systems. To avoid this pitfall, you need to understand and work toward improving the entire value stream in our core business operations. Holly, your thoughts on the shell game?

Holly: It's the wrong thing to do but again, there is a time for this. As you are early in your journey, you may not be able to be helpful to your suppliers. Even some customers in terms of bringing them into a broader view of your value stream. You will get to it, know that it is there, and you want to try to protect it from the shell game. The one add to build off of this is sometimes you will move waste because by moving the waste, if you can't see the way to eliminate it from the value stream you may move it somewhere else because it will reduce waste for the whole stream. Not because you want to off your plate but because it benefits the whole value stream. So whoever you are moving it to has to be support for that but there would be times when you would move waste because it's helpful and you can't see a way to eliminate it.

Darrell: [inaudible] great. Thank you. The next pitfall listed in the book is, grease monkeys. Pretty normal for a person who gets a new tool to show other people how well the tool works whether it is a new wrench for a mechanic or a gripper for a scrapbook or, it getting new tools is exciting. When it comes to Lean tools that can be the same way. People love to show off things that work. But it's important to make sure we are picking the right tools for the right job and not just our favorite tool. The book says, The carpenter can't build a bookcase with just a hammer and in the same way we won't create a culture of continuous improvement and deliver better value to Washingtonians would just value stream mapping for example. To avoid this pitfall we need to learn to use the full complement of tools and we need to make sure we are selecting the right tools for the right job at the right time. Holly, what advice do you have about this pitfall?

Holly: I want to commend you guys are doing a great job in helping ensure that you don't do this. This community of practice where you are having a lot of people with different experiences deploying late that you are using any number of advisers to get input even into the same group said they have different perspectives. Thinking of it in terms of apprenticeship which is sometimes how you learn about the tricks of deploying tools. I commend you guys for how you are already doing things to make sure this doesn't happen.

Darrell: Two more pitfalls, the next one is, Beans to our beans. This pitfall, the book makes the point we can expect traditional accounting methods to reflect improvements accomplished using Lean. Lean thinking will result in improvements that redefined boundaries and change how contributions are measured. To avoid this pitfall we have to work with accounting managers and budget managers to help them understand to account for improvements using Lean.

Holly: This is a hard one for an organization to take on. For any of you that feel like you want to think about what that looks like, I highly recommend the prize-winning book, real numbers that talks about what this might look like. Private sector not government. It difficult particularly when you are in a public setting and some of it is not legislative. This area tends to be one of the last areas organizations will tackle because there are so many laws that they may not control that are impacted by changes in accounting practices. It is something to move towards and you will have to be planning to do that.

Darrell: Work together and communicate. We have less than one minute left, busy bees is the last pitfall. A couple of points here. The activity does not include equal progress. You can be busy without being productive. To avoid this pitfall you need to align improvement efforts with the organization's priorities and long-term results. Holly, final thoughts on this one?

Holly: Particularly for all using practitioners are those guiding people through improvement activities, as you ask things or asks -- to do work, make sure you yourself have applied your waste filters for your request. If you are asking for data, make sure you are asking for just enough and not asking team members to overproduce. some filter of waste apply here relative to the activities we are doing.

Darrell: Thank you, Holly, for joining us today. Thank you everyone who is on the call today. There is no quiz this week, so next week will be the last chapter in the book review. Any final thoughts to say goodbye, Holly?

Holly: Just, use your umbrella if you are heading outside.

Darrell: Thank you so much for joining us today. We will see you next week.