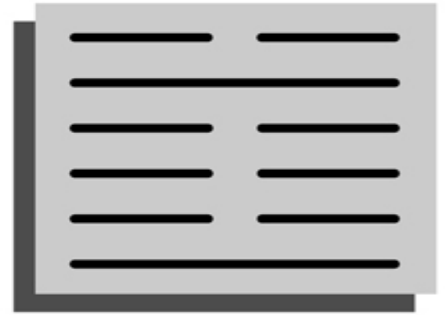


Change Management Associates



January 2013

Featured Topic



More Words Matter in Continuous Improvement (CI)

Dear Drew,

A good amount of my time over the past few months has been spent at the fall conferences delivering keynotes, presentations and workshops, as well as listening to colleagues do the same. I am always looking to improve my 'messaging'. I am always trying to hone my ability to teach a particular concept. Towards this objective I carefully listen to the questions that people have. Valuable information can be gathered about people's interpretation and understanding of a concept.

In addition, our January 2012 newsletter titled "It's How You Say It: Words Matter in CI" evoked a tremendous response. Several dozen people responded with their own thoughts and experiences on the subject of 'messaging'. I always appreciate when people share what has worked for them as we all strive to create a culture of continuous improvement in organizations in all industries. Therefore, I wish to share with you some recent personal learnings on this important subject.

During various on-site deliveries of our 'Lean Leadership' module, as well as presentations on this subject at conferences, I learned an important point about the term 'teaching'. We often say that leaders need to 'teach'. More specifically leaders should teach their direct reports and others with whom they come in contact about the direction of the business, and process improvement and problem solving methods, among other things. However the term 'teacher' stirs up apprehension in some people. Some people see a

Upcoming Events



CMA and our network affiliates have the following events scheduled:

AME Events:

Toyota Kata Workshop

Aston, PA

January 17, 2013

Hosted by Engineered Arresting Systems. After a tour of the facility, an introduction to Toyota Kata will be provided. [Click here](#) for more information.

Lean Bronze Certification Course & Exam

Philadelphia, PA

March 12-13, 2013

Hosted by the DVIRC, an exam preparation workshop will be delivered to be immediately followed by the AME/SME/Shingo approved exam itself. [Click here](#) for more information.

'teacher' as a person standing in front of a group of people, a 'class', and speaking with great authority on a particular subject. This picture is understandable given the life experiences of most people. However, apprehension arises with such a view of this role.

Some people are uncomfortable speaking in front of groups. "You want me to be a 'teacher'? I can't do what you do, standing up and speaking to groups." Others are uncomfortable speaking on a subject that they don't feel they are 'expert' in. "I can't teach problem solving. I'm still learning myself. I'm not an 'expert' like you." However, most teaching in a business environment doesn't take place in a classroom environment, and most often it is on a near one-on-one basis. Most leaders communicate in small group forums such as meetings. And the fact is nobody is really an 'expert' (I always cringe at the use of the term when people introduce me as being an 'expert' in some subject or another). We are all still learning, and we will always be 'students' our entire lives. I was taught many years ago that leaders didn't need to know all the answers, but rather the questions to ask at the proper time.

Rather than 'teacher', perhaps a term to better convey the true intent is 'coach'. Many of my colleagues are using this term. Most people think of a coach as a person on the sideline, providing guidance throughout the 'game', and providing direction on an as needed basis as the coach learns what is working or not working at that moment. Coaches teach in thoughtful and orchestrated ways during 'practice' leading up to the game. Repetition is used during practice as a means to teach so that the techniques are 'carried over' to game day. Certainly sounds more like what we are intending to convey with the term 'teacher', and perhaps the term 'coach' won't give rise to the aforementioned apprehension.

We often use the term 'huddle' to describe very brief and effective communication between a leader and his or her team members. We encourage leaders to establish huddles at the beginning of a shift or day to convey goals and objectives along with other information. Huddles at the end of the shift or day can reflect on recent performance as well as to prepare for the next shift or day. Huddles during the day can allow for effective communication of needed 'course corrections'. The objective for a huddle as well as the appropriate frequency is defined in a leader's 'standard work'.

A problem became apparent during observations of leaders engaged in such interactions. Too often the communication process was 'one-way' with the leader doing all of the talking. When asked about this, several people responded by saying "that's what a huddle is, the quarterback calling the play." This interpretation is quite understandable given the picture most people have when thinking about the term 'huddle'. However, our intent is for some 'two way' communication to take place between the leader and his or her team members. I have seen organizations use terms such as 'toolbox time', 'sunrise meetings', and others. Perhaps these terms better convey the true intent.

Building Leaders for Tomorrow - Today!
West Point, NY
March 6-8, 2013
Hosted by the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, this very special event covers the important subject of Leadership and includes a "behind the scenes" perspective of how the USMA develops the best leaders in the world. [Click here for more!](#)

Lean Enterprise Institute Workshops
San Francisco CA
February 5-7, 2013
Coaching Skills, Leader Standard Work, Optimizing Flow in Office & Services, VSM for the Office and more! [Click here for more information.](#)

Be sure to check out our publications!

"Lean Office & Services Simplified"
(2012 Shingo Prize recipient)

"The Complete Lean Enterprise"
(2005 Shingo Prize recipient)
VSM for Administrative & Office Processes

"Value Stream Mapping for Lean Development"

NEW!! "Unleashing the Power of 3P: The Key to Breakthrough Results"

Look at the terms you and your organization use. Do people understand their intended meaning? Are they creating some confusion or apprehension? After all words do matter in Continuous Improvement.

Best Regards

Drew Locher

Managing Director, Change Management Associates

Visuality Creates 'Capacity'

Talk about terms that generate a great deal of apprehension. Visuality, visibility, transparency - whatever term you choose to use - evoke strong emotional reactions in many people. "Big brother is watching", "Micro-management", "Airing our dirty laundry" are just several possible responses to this important concept.

I often make the point that visuality creates a sense of control of the work environment on the part of everyone, not just leaders. This sense of control in turn creates mental and emotional 'capacity'. One does not have to think as hard in a strongly visual workplace. People are not as stressed as well. This 'capacity' can be filled with creative activities such as idea generation, problem solving, process improvement, etc. After all Lean is about unleashing human potential.

Perhaps framing a discussion of the subject of 'visual management systems' in this way will better convey the true intent, and illicit a more positive response from people.



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Drew Locher
Change Management Associates
856-235-8051
www.cma4results.com