

Lean and POS: Challenges and Opportunities

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This white paper represents a collaborative effort between Operations Management and Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) faculty in the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business. The paper focuses on how "lean" process improvement practitioners can draw on the POS mindset and some of its tactics and interventions to augment their tool kit and improve process improvement project outcomes. It uses concrete examples from a 7-week multidisciplinary action project (MAP) that was designed to improve pharmacy operations in a local U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center. The intended audience for this paper includes any individual or team engaged in lean process and/or organizational improvement efforts.

I. Introduction to Lean and POS

A. Lean

1. Brief introduction

After the Second World War, Japanese industrialists set out to rebuild their economy, but were working in a very different economic landscape. Resources were scarce and the local market was much smaller than its American counterpart. For example, the entire Japanese automobile industry produced only 30,000 vehicles in 1950, about one and a half day's output of the American industry (Cusumano 1986). Yet, Japan still needed the full array of cars and trucks for its population. Satisfying such a market without costly duplication of machinery required systems that could operate efficiently in a small lot, high variety environment. This required flexible, efficient systems that made the most of its human and capital resources. Necessity was the mother of invention. Japanese manufacturers, most notably the Toyota Motor Corporation, embarked on a decades-long process of evolving a new production management system. This system, known initially as the Toyota Production System (TPS) and later as "JIT" and/or "lean" production, has been well catalogued elsewhere (Cusumano 1986, Toyota Motor Corporation 1998)). At a high level it is characterized by the Engineering objective of eliminating all redundancies and waste in the production system, and continually improving. From an HR perspective it is characterized by engaging workers in process improvements, and cultivating a culture in which workers willingly engage this process because they believe they will do well when the company does well. From a supply chain perspective, Japanese automobile manufacturers pioneered cooperative supplier relations. Specifically, post-War American manufacturers secured reliable supplies for their production processes by integrating backwards. This reduced the uncertainty of supply, and lowered the firm's vulnerability to opportunistic behavior by independent suppliers. In the 1950's, Toyota and Nissan

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departed from this practice, and actually increased their reliance on suppliers over which they did not have complete financial control. This was a way to save capital and avoid being left with excess capacity in a downturn. However, the problems of opportunistic behaviors remained. Toyota and Nissan learned how to simultaneously serve their interests and the interests of suppliers. This required, at times, that they offer the supplier more than they might in a more brutal negotiating environment. The objective was to secure a stable and mutually beneficial longer term relationship.

From both a worker and supplier perspective, the TPS depended on cooperative rather than competitive relationships, in which managers had to learn to attend to the mutual interests of the company, and those who supplied it and worked in it.

The focus of this paper is one aspect of this management philosophy, the process improvement teams of workers that were the engines for continuous improvement. In the TPS workers are given some discretion to recommend design changes to their work stations, and the time to brainstorm and hypothesize solutions to production problems. If a process improvement is successfully validated in practice, it is disseminated throughout the company. In this way a standard way of doing things is always in place, but is updated with successful new ideas as they arise. This is the dynamic behind “continuous improvement” in Toyota plants. A number of non-financial incentives is used to encourage such involvement.

For this to work, workers would have to believe that by helping the company they were helping themselves. Toyota had some natural advantages in this. Situated in a rural community, the workers had fewer alternative options, were less indoctrinated into the class struggle politics of urban centers, and had a high work ethic and tight social fabric. Also, management good will was cemented in 1950 when president Kiichiro Toyoda, forced to lay off many workers, took personal responsibility for disrupting so many lives and resigned (Cusumano, 1986).

Still, worker good will would soon be exhausted if labor's efforts compromised their job security. By subcontracting surge capacity for production, Toyota was able to maintain a constant core capacity and guarantee their full time (core) employees a job. The manpower reductions that attended sales downturns were borne by adjustment in the working hours and/or by temporary Toyota employees. Seniority pay was another mechanism by which employees were encouraged to think long term with the company, and be more willing to invest time and energy in process improvements that would enhance the company's competitiveness.

In most current press, popular and academic, the TPS is described with phrases such as “egalitarian”, “workers know best”, “respect for all”, “failures are opportunities to learn”, “worker empowerment to design their own jobs”, and “fanatical elimination of all waste”. Japanese terms like “kaizen” (continuous improvement), “poke yoke” (foolproof production, the system disallows poor quality), and “genba genbutzu” (go to the action, you can't solve problems in an office) are now part of the global manufacturing lexicon. Phrases like “stop the line” (workers can stop the entire production line rather than let a

poor quality part proceed) are invoked to represent not just a specific production tactic, but worker empowerment over production in general.

Not all observers would agree with all of these positive associations, a topic we return to below.

2. Challenges to lean practice

a. Maintaining high levels of excitement

Lean implementations take place in many companies all over the world and lean efforts often end with data-supported claims of local productivity gains. However, in our extensive involvement with lean practices we have also observed that the level of excitement and employee engagement with the change can decline after the lean team disbands and the management spotlight turns elsewhere.

For example, University of Michigan (UM) student teams doing lean projects often develop rich in-group bonds and are highly energized by their activities, the project, and their recommendations. This enthusiasm may extend to several key people in the greater organization who interact with the team. However, that same level of energy often does not extend to many outside the team, so when the team leaves there is not a high level of ownership or enthusiasm for the results and recommendations. While many of the changes remain in place, new implementations may be much less frequent. In some cases, this results in a regression of system performance, and a resulting (since “nothing really changes”) cynicism in the workforce toward future lean projects. The challenge is to make lean efforts sustainable from both a system performance and human capital perspective.

b. Bridging a potential tension between the objectives of workers and management

As described above, the language of lean suggests seeing challenges as opportunities, empowering workers, respecting their deep knowledge about their jobs, and asking them for help improving the overall system (Toyota Motor Corporation 1998). The language also suggests a focus on the performance of the company as a whole relative to its customers, drawing an implicit connection between the company doing well and each individual worker doing well. The implicit assumption is that treating people better, valuing them, and tying their work to the success of the greater organization will unleash their productivity in a self-reinforcing positive spiral, in which both the company and its workers prosper.

This narrative is not uniformly embraced by workers’ organizations. Indeed, some subgroups of the United Auto Workers paint a much darker picture of lean activities, which they call “management by stress” (Parker and Slaughter 1988). They point to a history of union opposition by Japanese auto manufacturers, which they interpret as opposition to organizations that reflect the workers’ interests. Indeed, in 1953 an automotive industry-wide strike by the industry union, called Zenji, was broken by a combined front of Japanese businesses and banks. Zenji collapsed and was replaced by company unions that included

white collar workers and were more sympathetic to management. Even today Japanese automobile companies have a reputation for preferring to locate their U.S. plants in non-union territory.

- The interpretation of lean critics is that the intent of process improvements (in automotive plants, in particular) is to speed up the assembly line so that cars can be made with less labor content. So, the end result of all of these efforts is for workers to work harder for the same level of rewards. The “empowerment” represented by a worker’s ability to stop the line if something is awry at his/her work station is, the critics say, not real empowerment. What happens when somebody actually stops the line is a cadre of managers converges on the work station to find out what went wrong, with the worker or his/her station the presumed location of the “problem.” Lean, they say, is just the velvet glove on corporate profit maximization, all the more insidious because it co-opts workers into working themselves either harder, or in the extreme out of a job (if capacity is increased sufficiently to make labor redundant), all by appealing to the workers’ commitment and goodwill.
- Lean proponents argue that lean makes work “better”. By getting rid of non-value adding steps, the workers and managers may actually work less for the same outputs. They acknowledge that, at some level there may be fundamental differences between workers and management regarding desirable means and ends. For example, workers may value discretion in making decisions, higher and more secure pay, and more control over their jobs. However, in a highly rationalized and competitive industry the company may require more standardization and work rules, less discretion (and the variable behaviors it allows), and prefer to pay less rather than more.
- Lean critics say that lean is sold to workers as attending to their needs when in fact it is designed to attend to the company’s needs, that these are divergent and it is this divergence (and the company’s allegiance to the latter) that breeds cynicism regarding lean activities.
- Lean proponents argue that when the Toyota philosophy is embraced piecemeal it will inherit some of these tensions, but that these can be corrected. For example, some early U.S. lean adopters gained the near-term benefits of worker-inspired process improvements, and then laid off workers because they had excess capacity. Naturally, this poisoned the waters for lean activities for generations of workers in those companies. But other companies honored commitments to not lay workers off as a result of their improvement efforts, and this paid positive dividends in labor relations.

3. Lean summary

Lean practices attempt to align the interests of workers and the company by allowing workers some discretion over how their work is done, while respecting the company’s need to be efficient and competitive. Lean practice involves workers in problem solving,

and rewards them for process improvements with a combination of symbolic recognition and the presumption of increased job security. Challenges to lean practice include a possible divergence of means/ends preferences between workers and management, and a tendency for the level of excitement and employee engagement with the process to decline after an initial excitement period, or after the lean team disbands and the management spotlight turns elsewhere.

Lean practices, as they have been exported to the US, have tended to focus on the more easily quantified, engineering-related aspects of the job (process improvements defined as reducing WIP inventory, or throughput time, etc.) and have been less focused on measuring and managing the human capital of the company beyond rewarding workers for physical process improvements. This unbalanced perspective is one possible reason for near term improvements regressing over time to the old status quo. The tactics required to maintain a high level of human energy and commitment are not as evident in the lean tool kit.

Faced with these challenges, it makes sense to consider whether there are new tools we can employ in lean activities that might foster sustained engagement with the change. One possible augmentation of the lean toolkit, that might help mitigate some of these challenges to the current practice of lean, is suggested by the subfield of Positive Organizational Scholarship.

B. Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS)

Many current academic business models assume self-interested actors, most notably in modern economics where “homo economicus,” a rational, self-interested economic being is the standard assumption. This model can claim some predictive success. But, the growth of “behavioral” dissident scholars in such fields as finance, marketing and operations represents a challenge to the homo economicus paradigm, which is increasingly being viewed as a useful but incomplete model. Indeed, the empirical evidence is convincing that, even in purely economic currency-exchange contexts people do not behave in a purely self-interested manner (c.f. Kagel and Roth 1997, Rand et al 2012).

With the “homo economicus” paradigm important opportunities for improvements in lean projects may be missed, specifically those grounded in the other-serving interests (i.e., prosocial motivation) of the people in the organization, which is one of crucial elements of POS.

POS concerns the study of phenomena associated with what individuals and organizations aspire to be when they are at their very best (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2011). A POS perspective suggests that organizations are most effective and most likely to achieve extraordinary performance when individuals accentuate what is right, what is inspiring, and what is good in organizations. Much like lean, POS involves engaging and empowering people and building their capabilities in order to reach higher levels of organizational performance. Lean and POS tactics also share a focus on enhancing both the individuals’ and collective’s capacities for learning. POS invites consideration of specific interventions that focus on fostering and institutionalizing higher levels of

- positive meaning,
- positive emotions, and
- positive connections among participants.

Interventions that tap into these three positive states for individuals unlock key renewable resources within individuals and groups that elevate both people and group's capacities to perform, while at same time, fostering well-being or more enduring psychological health. Research strongly suggests that these efforts will pay dividends for both individuals and organizations.

The difference between POS approach and strategic other-awareness (as would be represented, for example, by Nash equilibria in game theory) is an assumption of genuine concern for the other and their well-being. That is, in contrast to "the other" being instruments to gains to oneself, POS assumes that a strong motivation for individuals is to help and cooperate with others, i.e. prosocial motivation (e.g., Grant, 2007). Research suggests that self-interested motivation and other serving or prosocial motivation are independent and positively related motivations in work organizations (De Dreu & Nauta, 2009) .

While the language of lean and POS are similar in many ways, the focus and tactics of the two in actual practice reveal some fundamental differences. The focus of lean is on knowledge enhancement, the "how do we do this" skill level within individuals and the organization. This focus might have been expected given its roots in operations management, a discipline dedicated to the study of such execution skills. Also, the metrics of success one commonly sees in lean activities are related to productivity (cycle time, capacity, inventory levels, etc.).

In the context of organizational improvement, a more holistic socio-technical perspective on fostering effectiveness in organizations would suggest that knowledge is just one resource to draw on in designing and implementing process improvements. Taking a POS perspective opens new pathways for improving processes through enhancing the level of emotional, relational and meaning resources that also enhance people's capacities and capabilities to improve a process. By considering systematically a wider set of resources (rooted in core ideas from psychology and organizational studies) as means for fostering process improvements people working on lean projects have a broader repertoire of interventions to consider, as well as new ways to think about implementing more traditional lean improvements.

C. Lean-POS similarities and opportunities

Lean and POS practice share some perspectives, challenges and opportunities

1. Shared perspectives

a. The importance of a customer focus

One view of organizations is that they are purposeful social units, and the “purpose” of the organization is, oftentimes, to provide value for a target customer audience. Lean (and many other) process improvement efforts focus on this end objective to choose appropriate tactics and assess their level of success. POS also emphasizes a connection between the activities of people within the organization and value delivered to society outside the organization. However, to the extent that lean activities have by now routinized the imperative to “serve customers,” while in practice focus on more local operational metrics, a POS perspective promotes a greater emphasis on connecting one’s local actions to a greater purpose. Also see section II.A.2 below.

b. Define problems and challenges as opportunities

It is legend in the lean mythology that failures are perceived as opportunities to improve. The usual wording invokes positive connotations to failure, such as failures are gems to be learned from. The underlying logic is that the failures are due to poor processes and, therefore, certain to re-occur. Early detection and correction of the problem removes the stream of future failures.

In the psychology literature, research suggests that constructing events, issues, and processes as opportunities as opposed to problems has psychological consequences for people facing an issue (Dutton, 1993). Using an opportunity frame for applying meaning to an issue increases employees’ motivation to work on and improve the process, while also opening people up to a wider range of solutions and possibilities.

c. A premium placed on learning and progress

Continuously learning a better way to do things is an essential component of the lean approach. POS researchers also emphasize the gains in motivation and sustained engagement in a process if people believe they are learning and making progress towards some desired goal. Lean emphasizes learning how production can be made more efficient. POS, instead, focuses on the benefits of individuals’ being able to perceive personal progress. These, however, are often very similar. Research based on 12,000 daily diaries by 237 employees in 7 firms has shown a strong positive impact of employee’s being able to perceive meaningful progress in their work as critical for sustained engagement and performance on the job (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

2. Shared challenges

a. Long- versus short-term

The productivity metrics commonly invoked in lean activities drive a short-term focus. This has the advantage of being more attractive to management, who will commonly prefer more certain, near-term advantages to less certain, longer-term promises. This, however, prevents some lean activities from emphasizing foundational organizational work that might pay significant dividends longer term.

This is a challenge to POS, as well. Fundamental culture changes within organizations can take time and patience, rendering their economic advantages less certain and longer term. Consequently, the associated efforts may well receive lower priority in competitive industries.

However, the reversion to the status-quo feature of many lean projects suggests that the short-term gains, although highly valued by management, may be illusory.

b. Individual, team and organization

POS perspectives and tactics can apply at the individual, team or organizational levels. Like lean activities, organizational level gains are more long-term and more difficult than team level gains, and similarly for team versus individual. Repeating the above argument, in both POS and lean longer term gains may require patience and perseverance, which only come with top management buy-in.

3. Lean-POS Opportunities

POS and lean have many similarities beyond a common choice of language. They have a common interest in boosting organizational performance, they share the challenges posed by near-term versus longer term goals, and share a difficulty in extending individual or team-level gains to the organizational level.

Yet there are also significant differences in how lean and POS approach their tasks. Lean, as it has been implemented, emphasizes knowledge and skill building, whereas POS emphasizes increasing positive emotions, positive meaning and positive relationships as means for creating the engagement and motivation necessary for sustained process improvements. Empirical and scientific evidence suggests that both of these perspectives are important in people and organizations. The challenge and opportunity is to merge these perspectives into a more holistic approach to organizational improvement.

The remainder of this white paper begins this synthetic process, from the particular perspective of what POS can add to current lean practice, that would benefit lean teams and the organizations they work in.

II. Augmenting lean with concepts from POS

Lean practitioners can expand their toolkit to incorporate POS perspectives into process/organization improvement projects in order to implement solutions that will have more sustained impact on people's engagement and motivation on the job. Specific POS tactics fall into three main categories (Dutton and Glynn, 2008):

- Category 1: Increase and institutionalize the experience of positive meaning
- Category 2: Increase and institutionalize the experience of positive emotions
- Category 3: Increase and institutionalize the experience of positive connections

A. Category 1: Foster Positive Meanings

The POS perspective emphasizes tools and tactics that affect how meaning is attached to people, processes, and activities. Positive meaning is increased by imputing that a person, process or activity has value, worth or goodness. Below are some specific tactics that lean practitioners can adopt.

1. Tactic: Define people and units in terms of their strengths

Research suggests the value of helping people identify their strengths (Peterson & Park, 2006; Clifton & Harter, 2003). Awareness of one's strengths gives oneself a basis for creating positive self-meaning based on concrete knowledge about what one is good at or what are one's unique talents and abilities (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Participating in programs where one becomes aware of one's strengths fosters hope, self-confidence and increases well-being at work (Hodges & Clifton, 2004). In addition, strengths-based interventions are associated with higher levels of work engagement. When strengths are recognized and understood by the self and others, employees experience higher levels of self-worth and better appreciate what other employees bring to a project or task.

Example: The hospital team introduced earlier explicitly inquired about and identified the strengths of the pharmacy unit as well as causes of current problems. This inquiry helped to make more public the areas where the unit was performing well. Conducting such an appreciative inquiry into what the unit was doing well helped engage the pharmacy employees, and enabled them to see the student team as individuals who recognized their value. Rather than defining the pharmacy group as a "problem area" within the organization, the team defined the challenge as transforming it into a center of excellence. This helped the staff imagine new and attractive possibilities for the future. The student team believes that this effort paid significant dividends in the level of cooperation and engagement they received from the pharmacy.

2. Tactic: Strengthen the connection between people's work and their belief that they are having a positive impact on others

Grant and his coauthors (Grant & Hofmann, 2009; Grant et al., 2007) demonstrate the motivational effects of people seeing themselves as having beneficial impacts on others. In addition, motivation and engagement are enhanced when people see themselves as givers and contributors to people or processes that matter (Grant & Dutton, 2012).

Example: The pharmacy student team discovered that the pharmacy employees were disconnected from the positive impact they were having on patients. Through the interview process, the student team uncovered individuals' personal motivations for working in the VA system as opposed to another hospital setting. All interviewees identified the opportunity to help the veterans who fought for the country as a key driver of their decision to work in the VA system. Approximately one-third of interviewees also indicated that they themselves were veterans, and that the sense of giving back to those with which they had a shared experience was extremely motivating. By simply questioning

the pharmacy staff in a safe and trusted manner, the student team was able to get people thinking more deeply about the higher purpose of their jobs. This helped strengthen the connection between pharmacy employees' personal mission and positive impact on others. The student team recommended that management accentuate veteran assistance as the mission in order to more deeply motivate staff.

3. Tactic: Diffuse positive meaning through spreading of authentic stories where employees, management and project teams made a positive difference for others.

The POS perspective recognizes the power of creating (and repeating) positive stories in order to foster a greater sense of meaning in the workplace. Stories play an important role in organizations because they have the ability to shape thinking and behaviors (Martin & Powers, 1983). Attaching work to positive stories can enhance the meaningfulness for individuals.

Example: The VA student team received feedback from their faculty and hospital sponsors about the positive difference they were making through their work. The repeated story of how the head of the pharmacy division was emotionally impacted by the first team presentation kept the positive meaning about having beneficial impact salient and vivid throughout the project. The shared sense that the project was having positive impact kept student team members and pharmacy employees engaged in the project and enhanced commitment to have the project's recommendations effectively implemented.

B. Category 2: Foster Positive Emotions

Positive emotions (e.g. joy, gratitude, serenity, hope, pride, amusement) broaden one's thinking and help build durable, social, physiological and psychological resources that foster people's well-being (Fredrickson, 2013). People who experience positive emotions tend to think more broadly and creatively, seek out new information and experiences, behave more flexibly, have more confidence in their abilities and the abilities of others, are more persistent, recover from bad experiences and negative emotions more quickly, give and get the social support they need to solve problems and implement solutions, and better engage in the moment and plan for the future (e.g., Cohn et al. 2009)

1. Tactic: Cultivate gratitude expression on a regular basis

Gratitude is probably the most widely studied positive emotion in the last five years and experimental studies demonstrate that gratitude increases one's physiological health and cognitive functioning, and also fosters higher quality connections with others (Emmons, 2007; Emmons & McCullough, 2003)

Example: The pharmacy student team recommended that daily huddles be implemented in the pharmacy, not only to share information but also to institutionalize expressions of gratitude on a regular basis. Specifically, the team envisioned a daily huddle that would start with each person sharing - one at a time- what they are grateful for, or what they are celebrating that week. This would provide staff with a forum to voice their gratitude

towards other team members (for example, express appreciation about an action that a colleague took to make their job easier). Incorporating such behaviors into daily huddles can help employees feel gratitude (positive emotion), foster respect (positive connection) and see positive impact of their actions on others (positive meaning). In addition, this tactic provides some motivation for staff to notice positive cues around them.

2. Tactic: Actively focus on what is working and enabling desired outcomes

A focus on what are the enablers or success factors for a process has two salutary effects for people engaged in a process. First, focusing on key success factors (key issues driving or facilitating success) has the obvious consequence of focusing on what is important from a systems perspective. This is shared with lean and other traditional process improvement philosophies. But, at the same time these tactics can, by identifying the way forward, cultivate a sense of optimism and hope that further creates psychological and physiological resources (e.g. boosting immune system functioning e.g., Segerstrom et al., 1998) that are likely to increase an employee's ability to cope with and work on improvements in a process.

Example: One aspect of fulfillment that the staff identified was that the VA system enables them to work at the top of their pharmacy classifications. The VA system enables pharmacists and technicians to have responsibilities that are commensurate with their professional training. Retail pharmacies would not provide the same level of responsibility, and interviewees indicated that a key aspect of their satisfaction was the knowledge that they were performing at the top of their education. The team recommended that management focus and elevate the positive sentiments towards this aspect of the work.

3. Tactic: Strive for the momentary experience of more positive than negative emotions

Research suggests that it is important to consider the relative presence of positive and negative emotions at any one point in time for understanding human flourishing at work (Fredrickson, 2013). Individuals and units tend to perform (and feel) better when there are relatively more positive than negative emotions. This positivity ratio broadens people's capacity to think as well as builds resources such as competence, optimism and resilience that can be used in the future (Fredrickson, 2013). Positivity ratio(s) can be increased by structuring events so that the emphasis is on positive events, what's working, and positive relationships.

4. Tactic: Recognize the link between the physical environment and individual flourishing

Research suggests a beneficial impact of natural settings and appealing physical spaces on Individuals' well-being and health (e.g., Leather, Pyrgas, Beale & Lawrence, 1998; Maller, Townsend, Prayer, Brown & St. Leger, 2006). In hospitals this philosophy finds its voice in the efforts like the Planetree Alliance (started by Angelica Thieriot in 1978), which stresses "human touch" relationships among caregivers, patients and family; architectural designs

that are functional but also welcoming and comfortable; and expanded attention to the arts, among other recommendations.

Example: At the VA, discussions for improving space and layout revolved around two key areas. First, the student team considered the feasibility of removing the booths where patients receive medication counseling prior to receiving prescriptions. A trip to a peer facility demonstrated to pharmacy management the possibility of a process change that would enable the VA to remove the booths and prompted consideration of this option. Removing the physical space dedicated to the booths would provide more space for the pharmacy team to conduct their work as well as provide additional visibility to the veterans, as the booths separated the pharmacy staff from patients.

The second area considered for space expansion was the pharmacy vault. The vault was a small space in which at least one and sometimes two pharmacy technicians would spend the majority of their time. For medication security purposes, the vault had no windows and was a locked room with restricted access. Moreover, the vault was often a bottleneck in the process flow, demanding a faster pace and higher level of concentration and vigilance due to the strict regulations for the substances contained in the vault. Once again, the peer facility provided an example of a more spacious vault that met regulations for the storage of controlled substances, but allowed for a more open and accessible work space. Expansion of the vault would create an improved quality of life for the technicians who spend the majority of their time in the space.

C. Category 3: Build positive connections

Research affirms the power of short and long-term positive connections between people as a basis for building strength and fostering well-being (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Dutton & Ragins, 2007; Heaphy & Dutton, 2008). In addition, the research shows that small changes in the way people interact can produce desirable outcomes such as greater engagement, greater cognitive resources, more creativity and higher resilience. At the heart of positive connections is the experience of interacting in ways that cultivate positive regard, mutuality and /or greater energy.

1. Tactic: Respectfully engage others (unconditional positive regard)

Respectful behaviors are defined as those that show esteem, respect and care for another person. Research on civility, dignity, and respect suggest that everyday behaviors and small moves communicate how one person values another (Dutton, Debebe & Wrzesniewski, 2014). Gestures, speech, and bodily postures also convey and are interpreted as respect. When these behaviors demonstrate the basic human entitlements of respect and dignity they foster peoples' chances of experiencing a high-quality connection, allowing people to bring more resources to the table that are likely to contribute to sustained change.

Example: The student team started their interactions with the client using active listening. During the early project engagement meetings the team was mindful of the importance of allowing the staff to share their challenges. They listened to the employees and allowed

them to freely express their dissatisfaction. This made the employees feel heard, and gave them the ability to move forward in a more engaged manner. The team learned and acknowledged that the outpatient pharmacy was a challenging place to work, which contributed to employees feeling validated during the project.

Example: The pharmacy student team built positive connections with staff across the hospital by approaching everyone - no matter where in the organizational hierarchy - with equal amounts of respect and positive regard. They viewed front-line staff as “untapped gems,” rather than as resistors that could obstruct the process improvements. The team also did not enter the organization believing they were of “higher status,” due to their role as external consultants. This respectful attitude and authentic engagement was felt by the front line staff, which built buy-in. Moreover, this approach fostered positive connections, allowing the team to uncover valid information within the organization faster.

Example: Before their first presentation, the student team actively worked to put themselves in the shoes of the front-line staff and empathized in a way the staff could feel. The intentional use of perspective taking helped to make the content of the presentation relevant and understandable. The result was, in their first presentation, members of the staff were visibly moved, recognizing that this team “gets it” and understands their lives. The staff could *feel* that the MAP team understood them which increased their willingness to share information and facilitate the project’s progress. .

Example: One aspect of the VA project involved helping to standardize the flow of information across the organization in the instance of a local drug stock-out. The team met with many stakeholders individually, but the key meeting held to draw the process flow and identify the actions occurring during each process step was a clear example of respectful engagement among VA employees. This team was cross-functional and wide ranging in level of responsibility within the organization. The pharmacy leadership openly and respectfully listened to the challenges the procurement team faced and acknowledged the team’s efforts in balancing the heretofore undefined steps. The procurement team reciprocated by asking pharmacy leadership to explain the ideal state from their perspective, rather than emphasizing its own agenda or trying to fit the defined process into its current work habits. As a result, a process was developed that met the communication and timing needs of the pharmacy leadership while adapting many of the procurement team’s current work habits.

2. Engage in task enabling

Task enabling describes the variety of ways that individuals can help each other be successful on the tasks they are performing at work (Dutton, 2003). For example, when employees provide material, knowledge or emotional support to each other, these actions are likely to enhance another person’s capacity to perform a task, and this form of helping strengthens the quality of connection between people by increasing trust, and fostering the desire to help or reciprocate in the future.

Example: The VA student team held daily stand-up meetings (scrums) in which everyone was able to set priorities and also become aware of limitations of each team member for the day (e.g. on certain days, one team member had to leave early to pick up his children). This practice gave the team an understanding of what was to be achieved each day and allowed the team to evenly distribute tasks. It also allowed the team to task-enable their team mates. For example, if the team member had to pick up his children on a particular day, but had a meeting with a VA staff member at 2PM, the student team would ensure that other tasks were structured so that one other person was able to attend the 2PM meeting, in case the team member had to leave early.

3. Tactic: Build trust

Trust describes one person's willingness to be vulnerable to another (Mayer et al., 2005). If one person acts in a consistent, reliable and competent way towards another, it increases a person's trustworthiness and contributes to a more positive connection between them. Within work organizations, there are many ways that people build trust with one another, and the existence of this trust and the higher quality connections it affords, means interactions can be more efficient (as there is less monitoring required) and more effective as people are more willing to share a more comprehensive set of information, concerns and insights (Kramer & Tyler, 1996). For example, people build trust with one another through sharing more personal information, seeking input, granting access to key resources and developing joint goals (Dutton, 2003).

Example: The pharmacy procurement team was made up of two pharmacy technicians, one with responsibility for the inpatient pharmacy and one with responsibility for the outpatient pharmacy. In many ways, the inpatient and outpatient pharmacies were separate entities with independent stocking needs. However, in some cases, the inpatient and outpatient pharmacists "competed" for the same limited medications and pharmaceutical supplies. This was a source of potential conflict, but the two pharmacy technicians navigated the situation by building trust: They granted each other access to key resources, depending on which technician claimed to be in greater need of these limited supplies at the time. This "give and take" relationship based on honest dialogue and transparency built trust and ultimately enabled more efficient decision-making. The trust that was created helped the team limit stock unavailability and more effectively meet patient needs.

4. Tactic: Engage in play

Play facilitates skill development and fosters positive emotions. Further, when people engage in play with each other they enable variation in response patterns, promoting learning about another that fosters the building of a higher quality connection. Also, being fully engaged with others in modes of play sets the activity apart from the "real world," encouraging more interpersonal risk-taking, and a loss of self-consciousness. These attributes are conventionally related to greater creativity.

Example: The outpatient pharmacy hosted an ice cream social for all pharmacy employees. This event released some of the tension in the outpatient pharmacy that had been caused

by close work proximity and a challenging workload. The event enabled pharmacy staff to reconnect with each other in a personal, human way, rather than the more structured pharmacist-pharmacy technician relationship. In addition, the event provided an opportunity for pharmacy leadership to acknowledge the front-line staff for the efforts, which further improved morale.

III. Summary and Conclusions

Lean and POS are two approaches to organizational improvement that, in their best forms, share many objectives. However, as these two have been implemented there are differences in emphasis and tools that provide an opportunity for cross-fertilization. Lean focuses on knowledge and skill about how to do something with the objective of making that task more efficient, and on physical measurements of productivity gains such as decreased inventory or faster throughput. POS, in contrast, focuses on the means for fostering employee engagement, thriving and the creation of social capital as means for sustained excellence in performance.

From the POS perspective, knowledge and production skills are just one category of resources to draw on in designing and implementing sustainable process improvements. Others include the level of emotional, relational and meaning resources that enhance people's capacities and capabilities to improve a process and to maintain a commitment to improvement over time.

Lean and POS share the perspectives of a customer focus, defining problems as opportunities, and emphasizing learning. However, POS focuses on these at the individual level, where serving customers is perceived as making a positive difference in the world, seeing problems as opportunities is just one way to give events a positive interpretation, and learning is seen as individual development, a source of pride and enhanced skills at helping others.

This difference in perspective has some tactical consequences in the tools and frameworks that these two (lean and POS) approaches adopt. This white paper hypothesizes that lean practitioners can enhance their capabilities by adopting some of the tools used in POS. We covered some specific POS tactics in three categories, focusing the experience of positive meaning, positive emotions and positive connections.

Managers or teams can foster positive meaning for work by strengthening the connection between people's work and their impact on others, for example by spreading stories about how workers have had a positive impact on others. They can foster positive emotions by institutionalizing expressions of gratitude on a regular basis; by focusing on successes; by striving in conversation for an abundance of positive relative to negative commentary; and by recognizing the importance of positive work attitudes and the design of the physical environment. Managers and teams can build positive connections by respectfully engaging others, helping others (task enabling), building trust, and engaging in play.

One motivation for writing this paper is our empirical observation that lean efforts that achieve short-term success can still suffer from a declining level of performance over time, regressing to the old status quo. Further experience will confirm or not our hypothesis that engaging some POS tactics and perspectives may improve the level of longer term employee engagement with and support for organizational improvement.

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