

Developing your leaders to become effective lean coaches and unleash your lean transformation journey

It has become evident that coaching is a critical success factor for achieving lean transformation and continuous improvement. The ultimate goal of lean coaching is to enable people to reach their potential, thus optimizing their own performance and the value they add to the organization. In the coaching role, leaders are asking powerful questions rather than giving specific advice or answers. Effective coaches learn how to help a person discover answers to facilitate their own learning and development. When leaders learn and practice lean coaching, a culture of continuous improvement become pervasive and long-lasting.

“Coaching is unlocking a person’s potential to maximize their own performance. It’s helping them to learn rather than teaching them.”

- Tim Gallwey, author of the Inner Game

What Is Lean Coaching?

Lean Coaching is about helping people become better lean thinkers and practitioners. Lean Coaching is helpful for leaders and the workforce. Transformation to a lean management system takes significant time and practice. Accordingly, Lean Coaching consist of regular and timely interactions to develop continuous improvement skills and to enable a lean management system. In a Lean Coaching relationship, the coach will ask questions that stimulate critical thinking skills and reinforce systematic approaches for improving how leaders lead and how work is done. Lean coaches ask questions that typically follow a sequence of:

1. What is the goal or target condition we are trying to achieve?
2. What is the current level of performance?
3. What is keeping us from achieving the target?
4. What improvement ideas can be tested and what results would we expect?
5. When will we know if the test was successful?

In a lean management system, leaders must learn how to become lean coaches. This is a different way of leading and managing. Lean leaders must transition away from directing people in how to address and fix problems. Instead, leaders must become lean coaches and develop the workforce to become skilled problem solvers following systematic approaches. Thus, leaders need practice and coaching so they can develop into effective Lean Coaches.

Lean coaching may begin with scheduled coaching sessions with one-on-one or group coaching. Over time, it will become integrated into regular daily interactions, both schedule and impromptu.

How Do People Benefit from Lean Coaching?

With Lean Coaching, leaders develop the leadership skills they need to become effective lean leaders. Without coaching, leaders struggle to make the behavioral changes and routines necessary for a lean management system to be effective. When Lean Coaching is adopted, leaders get timely support and reinforcement to continue practicing and refining the competencies required to succeed. Leaders learn how to follow a pattern of asking powerful questions that engage and empower employees to systematically eliminate waste and improve customer value.

The workforce benefits from Lean Coaching through the job enrichment that comes with a lean management system. First, employees develop new skills that enable their ability to add greater value and contribute in a much bigger way to organizational success. Second, a lean culture is one in which all employees are engaged and empowered to make things better. Lean Coaching is a necessary activity to create this environment.

What leaders need to know:

- How to coach for continuous improvement
 - How to ask powerful questions
 - How to conduct Gemba walks
 - How to exemplify “respect for people”
 - How to conduct coaching sessions with individuals and groups
 - How to apply the right coaching approach for the right situation
 - How to develop their own coaching skills (coaching kata)
 - How to develop standard work for lean coaching
 - How to coach other coaches
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How we can help

- Conduct workshops to learn and develop lean coaching skills
 - Help leaders practice lean coaching in simulated and real work environments
 - Coach the lean coaches – in-person and virtual capability – to further develop skills over time
 - Help lean coaches to evaluate their effectiveness and create self-development plans
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Who can benefit

- Executives
- Middle Management
- Front Line Leaders
- Lean Sensei
- Lean Coaches
- Value Stream Owners
- Kaizen Facilitators
- Lean Transformation Leaders
- Lean Six Sigma Black Belts and Green Belts
- Master Black Belts

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