

By Carl Deeley, Lean Value Chain Practice Leader, TBM Consulting Group, Inc.

While discussing the merits of policy deployment with one of our long-term clients the topic of management “style” and “personality” came to the table. This is a common discussion point with corporate and site leadership teams, so the next day on my flight to Washington I reworked the discussion points and recalled my own experiences that helped shape my opinions on what can be a very emotional subject.

When I first entered the factory environment I had a boss who was truly a “hard piece of work,” as my father says. He seemed at the time to be displeased with just about everything, but those things he was pleased about were appreciated by everyone. Several years and bosses later I reported to someone whom I at first thought would be the perfect manager: accessible, approachable, and apparently not interested in getting involved in the details of my responsibilities. Within a short period I was looking for a transfer. Why? Because under this manager guidelines and codes of conduct were not clear—the only constant was uncertainty and change in direction, both of which were frustrating and disabling to my effectiveness.

From that point on I took the stance of being predictable to the people that I worked with. I call this the art of consistency. It’s an art because to achieve it you have to practice, to interoperate a situation and align your actions to the values and codes of conduct in which you believe.

I found that being predictable in my approach helped my peers and, more importantly, my direct reports to be more effective. When a manager uses a consistent approach, it allows people to take action immediately rather than wait for direction. I’m of the opinion that someone who is part of an organization should know how to react to any situation. This ability to react should not be confused with having “the answer;” instead it means that everyone knows how to move forward in a way that is consistent with the rest of the organization’s values and expectations.

Lean managers focus on process, and this includes maintaining an improvement culture. Change will more likely be sustained when the individuals affected have

information that helps them conclude that the change is positive and beneficial. It’s the manager’s responsibility to keep the information flowing.

When you’re promoting continuous improvement and creating an environment for change, you also have to provide a firm anchor point—a stable foundation from which the organization can work. I have found that consistency in how you do things provides that stability, and this consistency includes your decision-making processes like policy deployment, performance metrics, daily workplace reviews, and your change methodology, such as kaizen and Design for LeanSigma®. Being consistent in insisting that change is made through cross-functional or team-based processes will help you unite the organization and keep emotions in the workplace positive.

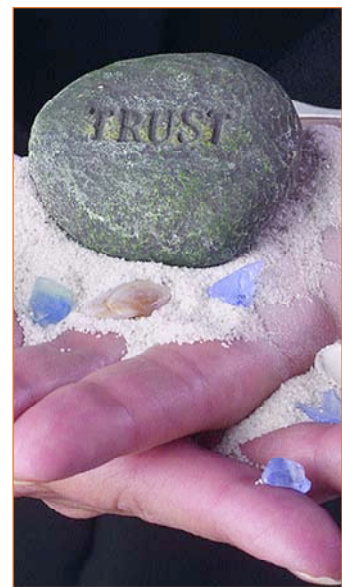
All of this needs to be backed up by a clear set of values. If your organization hasn’t published a set of corporate values, then take the time to communicate to your peers and reports what’s important to you. You can’t rely on the intuition of your fellow work associates to determine your expectations; you have to communicate regularly and demonstrate those values and expectations through your own actions. Remember if you walk past an issue without responding then that makes you part of that issue. Knowing and doing are two separate things, and a lean leader must expect and demonstrate both.

Management style reflects who you are as an individual, and there is no right or wrong style, but it’s still important that your preferred style melds well with your work teams. You must know and master yourself first and then decide if your organization’s and co-workers’ values, styles, and personality are a reasonable fit. If so, then you’ll likely be able to help the business and its people grow and move forward as a learning organization on its lean journey. ■

*I am always interested to hear the experiences of others in a bid to understand more about what has worked and hasn’t worked. Please contact me through e-mail at [cdeeley@tbmcg.com](mailto:cdeeley@tbmcg.com) if you would like to share your experiences or would like to discuss issues in the field of management facing you today.*



Carl Deeley



**“It is difficult to be always the master of oneself”  
—Gautama Buddha**