

LEVERAGING LEAN TO ENHANCE TEAM OF TEAMS

Summary. Agility reigns in today's whirlwind of change. Companies must wield tools, systems thinking, and collaborate effectively to streamline processes, fuel teamwork, and collectively create value. This necessitates a more holistic approach that goes beyond individual tasks and focuses on optimizing the entire workflow, from ideation to execution. This means creating a collaborative environment where employees can share ideas, work effectively together, and hold themselves and each other accountable for achieving shared goals.

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Today's business landscape requires a more advanced scientific method

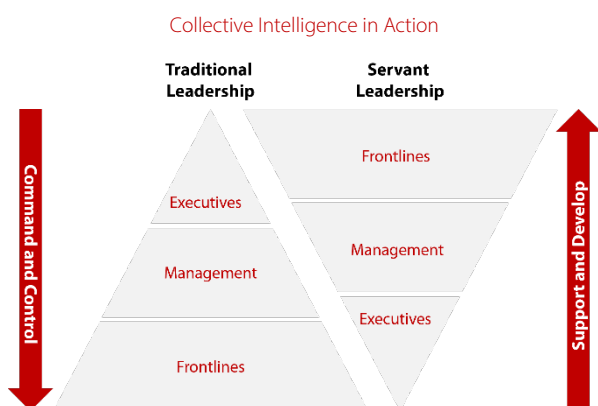


Scientific management, pioneered in the early 20th century by Frederick Taylor and Henry Ford, focused on optimizing individual tasks to maximize efficiency. While this methodology yielded significant productivity gains in its era, it also fostered a culture of distrust towards workers and relied heavily on fear as a motivator. It relegated individuals to the status of mere cogs in the profit-generating machine of Big Business, suppressing opportunities for decision-making and creativity.

Today, efficiency is no longer the sole determinant of success. Companies must evolve to navigate the complexities of the modern business landscape, characterized by rapid technological advancements, global interconnectedness, and dynamic market conditions. To thrive in this environment, companies require resilience, agility, and a commitment to continuous learning. This necessitates a shift from traditional hierarchical command-and-control leadership to a more collaborative approach, one that empowers individuals to contribute their unique skills, knowledge, and perspectives.

The Rise of Collective Intelligence

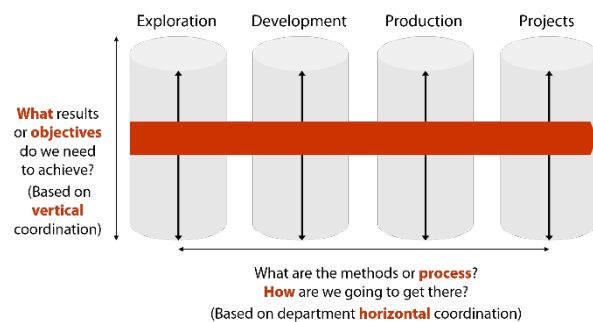
In an increasingly technologically complex society, accomplishing any significant endeavor demands the input of information and process managers who no longer possess the breadth of knowledge to make informed decisions and execute effectively. The collective intelligence of all employees is essential to navigate the dynamic challenges and evolving demands of the modern business environment. Only by leveraging the collective intellect can companies adapt, innovate, and thrive.



Decentralized Work Requires Collective Value Creation

One of the most significant changes in recent years is the increasing decentralization of work. The influx of specialized workers and the accelerating pace of innovation fuel the need for agility, driving organizations to rely more heavily on distributed teams, remote workforces, and external partnerships. This shift presents a challenge to traditional management systems, which were designed for more centralized control.

Systems Thinking Requires Horizontal Coordination¹



In today's world, companies must adopt tools, systems thinking, and behaviors for improved process management that supports collective work and value creation. This necessitates a more holistic approach that goes beyond individual tasks and focuses on optimizing the entire workflow, from ideation to execution. This means creating a collaborative environment where employees and stakeholders can share ideas, work effectively together, and hold themselves and each other accountable for achieving shared goals.

Purpose Drives Shared Action

Decentralized workforces also rely heavily on the clear articulation of purpose. Scattered across locations and acting independently, they need a north star, a unifying mission that resonates deeply and fuels collective action. This purpose shouldn't be dictated from above; it should be co-created through dialogue and collaboration.

Imagine interactive workshops where leaders and employees, side-by-side, dissect the company's vision and translate it into a tangible, shared strategy. Not just information dumps, these sessions become vibrant forums for respectful debate, consensus building, and ultimately, joint ownership. The outcome? A watertight "contract" outlining individual roles and responsibilities, all aligned with an overarching goal.

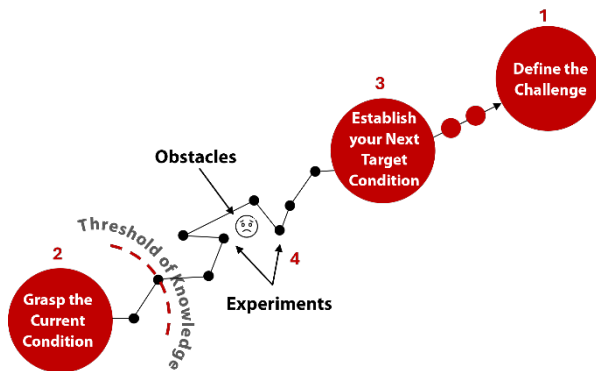
This isn't theoretical. Take Shingo-winning companies, global champions of decentralized excellence, as an example. They use Hoshin Kanri, a powerful process that deploys a shared purpose and strategy up, down, and across the organization. This approach fosters an unwavering commitment and unleashes the collective power of their workforce.

¹ M. Hoseus, Center for Quality People & Organizations.

Problem-Solving as a Path to Self-Management

Navigating the modern workplace's ever-shifting landscape demands agility and resilience. Continuous learning and adaptation are no longer luxuries; they're essential for success. This necessitates empowering and developing employees to think, work, and react more scientifically, moving beyond instinctive leaps of imagination to repeatable tests of well-reasoned hypotheses.

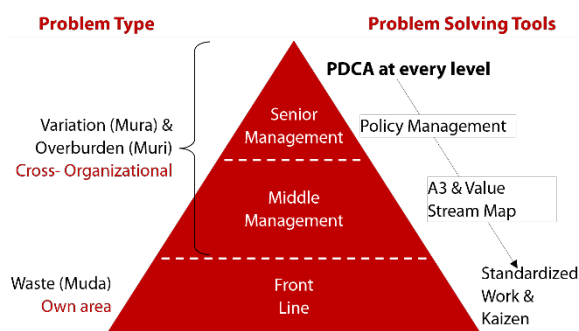
Pattern for Scientific Thinking²



Developing robust problem-solving skills becomes paramount in this scenario. This goes beyond generic training; it involves equipping employees with structured and adaptable methods tailored to specific problem types. Here, Toyota's A3 process shines as a beacon of democratized problem-solving. In the heart of arguably the world's most meticulously studied management system, the A3 technique empowers every team and individual by putting the proven Plan-Do-Check-Adjust (PDCA) cycle within their grasp.

By encouraging active participation in learning and elevating problem-solving skills at all levels, organizations build a scientific thinking workforce that thrives on uncertainty. This resilient and adaptable workforce is not just equipped to weather challenges, but also to actively seek and capitalize on emerging opportunities. And within this empowered environment, self-management flourishes, driving sustainable success for both individuals and the organization as a whole.

Problem & PDCA Tools for Different Levels



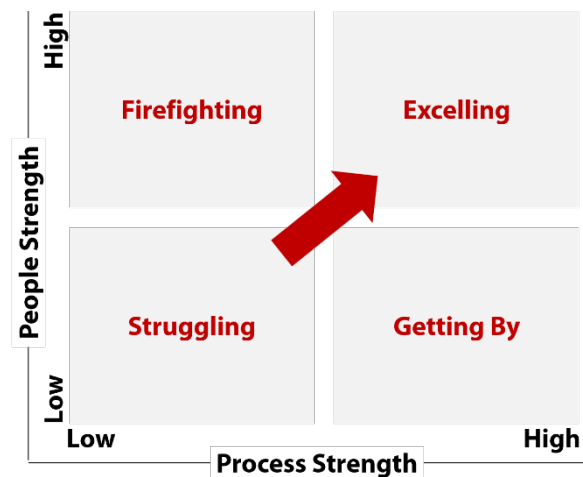
² M. Rother, The Improvement Kata, https://public.websites.umich.edu/~mrother/The_Improvement_Kata.html

Leaders as Culture Builders & Developers of People

Adaptability, resilience, and performance excellence aren't merely products of individual skill sets or efficient processes. They flourish in an environment where trust, co-creation, empowerment, and problem-solving thrive. Cultivating this fertile ground requires a radical shift in leadership: a transition from hierarchical control to coaching and individual empowerment.

As Edgar Schein, the renowned organizational culture expert, reminds us, "The only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture." This metamorphosis from control to coaching isn't a mere change in strategy, but a profound transformation in leadership philosophy. It's a conscious move from positional authority to collaborative partnership, where everyone feels valued, heard, and empowered to contribute their best.

PDCA and Striving for Excellence³



Exceptional People and Exceptional Processes Go Hand in Hand

By fostering such an environment, leaders unlock a hidden reservoir of potential within their teams. Individuals become empowered to take ownership, experiment, and learn from their experiences, unleashing a continuous stream of innovative solutions and propelling the organization forward. This is where servant leadership takes root. By serving their teams, leaders cultivate an environment where individual and collective problem-solving grows, propelling the organization to adapt and excel in the ever-shifting landscape of today's world.

What Team of Teams offers



In his groundbreaking book, *Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World*, General Stanley McChrystal challenges the traditional hierarchical structure and command-and-control approach to military operations, advocating for a revolutionary paradigm shift that empowers small, autonomous

³ J. Liker and J. Franz, "The TOYOTA WAY to Continuous Improvement" (2011): p. 41.

teams.⁴ McChrystal vividly recounts how this new approach proved instrumental in the Iraq War, enabling the military to swiftly respond to an ever-evolving adversary. By fostering a culture of decentralized decision-making and shared responsibility, McChrystal rebuilt the traditional management hierarchy to create a hybrid organization that preserved the mission clarity of command-and-control while exploiting the intelligence gathering and quick response capabilities of independent teams. McChrystal's leadership of the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) ushered in a new era of military agility and effectiveness.

McChrystal's concept has application beyond the battlefield, offering valuable insights for businesses and organizations facing the challenges of an increasingly complex world. In periods of unprecedented crisis, leaders need practical management practices that can scale to thousands of people—and fast. The Team of Teams approach provides a framework for empowering small teams to experiment, share knowledge, and make better, faster decisions, enabling organizations to respond more quickly, communicate more freely, and adapt to the unknown.

Key Principles of Team of Teams Framework:

Common Purpose

A shared purpose acts as the engine propelling a group of individuals into a cohesive, well-oiled team, united by a common vision and shared values. Open dialogue is vital for weaving a clear, unifying narrative that informs decision-making, prioritization, strategy formulation, and resource allocation. Communicating this common purpose across all departments and levels, while encouraging dialogue around actionable strategies, ensures that the Team of Teams organization remains aligned with its strategic goals. This alignment is further reinforced by a system of key performance indicators (KPIs).

Trust and Shared Understanding

In today's increasingly interconnected world, organizations heavily rely on the collaborative efforts of multiple teams to achieve their objectives. However, effective collaboration demands more than simply assembling individuals and assigning tasks. It requires a foundation of shared understanding and trust among teams, enabling them to work cohesively towards common goals. Without this shared foundation, teams risk producing incomplete solutions, overlooking team interdependencies, and ultimately hindering overall progress.

Trust and understanding are reinforced through a system of liaisons, team members formally assigned from other departments or organizations whose primary role is to break down communication barriers.

Breaking down silos and fostering collaboration are crucial for Team of Teams success. Establishing a Joint Operations Center and holding weekly Operations Briefs can do wonders in this regard. By bringing together representatives from various teams, these practices allow for information exchange, aligned decisions, a shared sense of purpose, and the growth of trust.

Shared Consciousness

The Team of Teams framework thrives on unwavering trust and camaraderie between members, forging a cohesive unit that transcends individual differences. This trust flourishes through frequent gatherings in communication forums where team members harmonize on the overarching narrative, share intelligence, and tackle arising challenges together.

To further cultivate cross-team empathy and synergy, silos are broken down by facilitating deliberate shared experiences. Examples include rotating team members across functions to broaden perspectives and organizing team-building events for personal connections. These intentional encounters foster trust, understanding, and a powerful "we" spirit, ultimately driving success and innovation across the entire team network.

Empowered Execution

Empowered execution is a transformative practice that enables teams to act decisively and independently in situations requiring immediate action. It builds on shared consciousness, allowing teams to leverage their knowledge, expertise, and collective understanding to make sound decisions without constant external validation. Even when equipped with a common purpose and the trust and transparency necessary for informed decisions, teams often find themselves stifled by the need for excessive approvals. Such approvals take time and hinder swift action, impeding each team's ability to respond effectively to dynamic situations. To address this, empowered execution establishes clear boundaries for each team, defining a "decision space" where it can operate independently, free from permission or fear of repercussions, and where it cannot.

Lead Like a Gardener

In the vibrant garden of a Team of Teams organization, traditional hierarchical leadership styles resemble weeds, choking the very autonomy and collaboration that make this framework flourish. Instead, effective leaders adopt the role of gardeners, tending to the conditions that allow teams to blossom and bear fruit.

Their primary focus shifts from micromanaging daily operations to nurturing the culture. This means actively cultivating trust and respect between teams, creating

⁴ S. McChrystal, et al., *Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World* (2015).

an environment where team autonomy is not just tolerated but encouraged. Unlike a lone sunflower reaching for the sun, a successful Team of Teams operates like a colony of interwoven vines, supporting, and strengthening each other.

Embracing this approach brings forth more than just increased organizational efficiency. It sparks a deeper sense of ownership in every team member. They're no longer cogs in a machine, but active participants in shaping the organization's future. This empowered ownership drives meaningful contributions at all levels, allowing the collective wisdom and energy of the teams to become the engine of success.

Team of Teams Summary



The principles of Team of Teams, derived from battlefield experiences, represent a significant evolution from the early tenets of scientific management. Concepts like multifunctional teams and regular communication updates for improved information flow; trust-building collective consciousness programs; empowered decision-making practices; and the emergence of a new leader archetype as the cultivator of a Team of Teams culture all hold immense relevance in the business world.

What Lean offers



As the most thoroughly examined and revered management paradigm globally, Lean holds a well-deserved position of prominence. Pioneered by Toyota in the mid-20th century and continuously refined by them, their suppliers, and countless devoted followers, Lean has revolutionized organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Recognizing the need for seamless end-to-end workflows and maximized value creation, Lean organizations have honed process engineering and problem-solving to ensure a smooth, waste-free flow from inception to customer satisfaction, all while remaining agile in the face of ever-changing business landscapes.

At the heart of Lean lies a fundamental understanding: processes and problem-solving are driven by people. This recognition fuels Lean's commitment to developing the behaviors, capabilities, and coaching needed to empower individuals and teams for greater impact. This human-centric approach cultivates engaged, skilled personnel who actively participate in driving continuous improvement and innovation.

To identify Lean's potential for enhancing a Team of Teams, we'll delve into the core characteristics of a Lean business system. Decades of refinement have sculpted Lean into a robust framework, an integrated system of Purpose, Process, and People propelled by the continuous engine of Problem-Solving. Let's explore each element and its potential to enhance a Team of Teams.

Key Characteristics of a Lean Business System:

Purpose

Lean's journey begins with a clear purpose, known as a "hoshin," a term for direction or true north. This purpose becomes the compass guiding the entire organization. Lean organizations define their purpose as a series of interconnected improvements aimed at enhancing value for all stakeholders, with a special focus on both internal and external customers. This could involve offering better, more affordable products or services.

To communicate this purpose and chart the course, Lean leaders leverage a robust strategy deployment process and supporting tools. Unlike a traditional top-down monologue, this process fosters a give-and-take dialogue—known as "catch ball"—throughout the organization. This two-way dialogue is documented in performance contracts—one for each team—that specify shared goals, actionable steps, and necessary resources. These Lean practices hold immense potential for elevating the shared consciousness within a Team of Teams organization.

Once strategy execution begins, Lean organizations thrive on collaboration. Enter the "obeya", also known as the "big room." Big rooms are dedicated spaces where teams convene to conduct vibrant huddles. These occur regularly, based on a built-in business cadence for a "check and adjust" process. The huddle process includes reviewing metrics for key targets and agreeing on adjustments, ensuring adaptability—because, as we all know, plans rarely unfold exactly as envisioned. This real-time recalibration fosters ongoing adjustments to shared consciousness while empowering strategic execution.

The strategy deployment process, with its focus on conversations, contracts, and check-and-adjust cycles, offers a compelling infrastructure for decentralized networks like Team of Teams. It could also help to reinforce trust in the right people working on the right things, with shared interests and capabilities to deliver ambitious, large-scale, and complex change.

People

Lean's philosophy rests on a powerful principle: "make people before making products." This principle is based on the understanding of the power of combining the scientific method (PDCA) with the talents of a fully empowered workforce. This translates to empowering each team in a Lean organization to operate as an independent mini-company within the larger network of teams, cultivating ownership, transparency, and customer focus. Each team member becomes a vital contributor, empowered to take initiative, leverage their unique talents, and flourish through challenge and development—making their organization the best in its field.

Developing people isn't just a cost; it's a strategic investment with tangible returns. Structured

development programs and hands-on problem-solving are distinguishing features of Lean. This ensures that individuals not only learn but also reach their full potential. This investment fosters trust in individual capabilities and empowers teams to self-manage, freeing leaders for strategic initiatives.

Lean thrives on collective creativity, requiring a departure from hierarchical leadership. The focus shifts from control to valuing individuals, unlocking their potential, and fostering collaborative problem-solving. Lean master coaches support leaders in this transition from "manager" to "enabling coach," freeing them for larger initiatives and cultivating a culture of ownership and success.

Lean people development practices foster win-win partnerships, boosting business prosperity through continuous improvement and enhancing employee satisfaction. For example, a study of public hospitals implementing Lean found a strong causal relationship between Lean adoption, strong top management team engagement, and increased employee engagement. This, in turn, led to a significant positive impact on the quality of patient care.⁵ Lean's power transcends individual benefits, knitting everyone together under shared principles and values. For a Team of Teams, the same Lean practices have the potential to elevate trust and shared consciousness by establishing predictable behaviors that align with the organization's core values.

Process

In the words of Lean architect Taiichi Ohno, "We simply analyze the chain of activities from customer order to cash collection, ruthlessly eliminating non-value-added wastes." This core philosophy captures the essence of Lean: a problem-solving ecosystem, driven by people who navigate a structured sequence of steps (the Lean process).

Importantly, Lean recognizes that value flows horizontally. Understanding these interlinked processes, not just isolated silos, is essential for achieving our overarching purpose. By systematically structuring work and processes around customer satisfaction, Lean ignites synergy across the organization. This holistic approach eliminates traditional, vertical barriers, fostering seamless horizontal coordination and optimized workflows.

Lean offers powerful methods for improving value streams, starting with comprehensive systems analysis of processes for optimization through value stream mapping. This visual mapping technique helps identify and eliminate non-value-added activities, streamlining the customer journey. By designing work following "Rules In Use", which encompasses simple, clear, direct flows of material and information, where activities are standardized, and handoffs and connections are

unambiguous, organizations do the work needed right the first time and make problems visible.

Lean's disciplined combination of end-to-end process management, continuous improvement driven by just-in-time and pull principles, standardized work, leadership engagement, and problem-solving—can empower agile, value-driven processes in *all* decentralized environments, including a Team of Teams. In effect, the Lean approach to process management defines a highly organized decision space in which empowered employees may typically follow well-articulated standards. In a Lean environment, a manager or employee typically knows what to do next. Any deviation from standard practices or standard conditions becomes immediately clear. And this leads to quicker problem resolution, a topic that we address in the next section.

Problem-Solving

Problems give birth to improvement. Lean empowers teams by authorizing and equipping them to solve problems "at the lowest possible level of the organization." This cultivates capable, engaged employees and teams who drive continuous improvement and learning. At the heart of this approach lies robust problem-solving grounded in the scientific method, echoing architect I.M. Pei's words: "Success is a collection of problems solved." As teams gain expertise, they become more adaptable, innovative, and customer-focused, freeing up leaders to concentrate on bigger initiatives. Lean provides specialized tools for each level of the management hierarchy:

- *Executives:* High-level strategy management tools.
- *Middle managers:* A3s, value stream maps, and seven quality tools.
- *Frontline staff:* Standardized work, the seven quality and kaizen tools.

This tiered approach can be used to tackle all types of problems, simple or complex, from routine troubleshooting to open-ended innovation. Shared skills, tools, language, and behaviors build a community of scientific problem solvers where running experiments is routine. This fosters a culture of learning and continuous improvement, driven by Lean's PDCA cycle.

The problem-solving infrastructure of Lean can further enhance a Team of Teams trust-based decision space for empowered execution. Actually, Lean Process and Problem-Solving, driven by People, work together. As we saw above, lean processes are carefully designed to make problems visible. Lean Process creates a highly standardized environment in which deviations from standard immediately indicate problems that must be solved. Once problems emerge, lean teams are fully

⁵ S. Hawarna, S. Ahmed, I. Alqasmi, D. M. Ashrafi, M. K. Rahman & P. Paraman, "The Intricate Relationship of Employee Engagement and Lean Approach

toward Quality Improvement of the Public Hospitals" (2023), Hospital Topics, DOI: 10.1080/00185868.2023.2192995

empowered and well-equipped to solve them, so long as they follow the scientific method. The same standards that make problems visible create a set of

“controlled conditions” that support the testing of hypotheses or improvement ideas generated by the team.

Why Many Struggle with Lean

Three common misconceptions that derail Lean's transformative potential:

- *Leader responsibility: Lean is not a task to be delegated. It demands unwavering leadership commitment, the ability to shape purpose and strategy, and the development of problem-solving skills alongside a cultural shift towards Lean principles.*
- *Tool fixation: Mistaking Lean for a toolbox overlooks its core purpose—building a culture of continuous improvement. Tools are just catalysts, not the essence. Lean thrives on a deeply embedded mindset tailored to each organization's unique context, not on "copy and paste" approaches.*
- *Underestimating the journey: Mastering Lean is like learning an instrument. It takes dedicated practice, experienced guidance, and continuous learning. Shortcut solutions rarely, if ever, yield transformative results.*

Importantly, Lean is not a system exclusive to automotive or manufacturing, nor is it simply about waste reduction. Its true power lies in grasping the underlying principles that drive genuine transformation across any industry or context. These principles reshape how we think about the way we do our work, and how we think about it both enterprise-wide and for each individual human that's involved in that entire system.



Final Summary: Leveraging Lean to Enhance Team of Teams



Team of Teams		Lean	
<p>While the military origins of the Team of Teams framework don't invalidate its value in the business world, it's crucial to consider its strengths and limitations. Its core principles – decentralization, decision space, aligned narratives, networking, and cadence – hold immense potential for fostering agility and collaboration. However, the framework currently lacks standardized processes and tools across its four key areas: common purpose, trust & understanding, shared consciousness, and empowered execution.</p>	<p>Specifically, Team of Teams lacks a formal process for developing individuals in scientific thinking and empowered execution, as well as methods for managing organizational processes and workflow. This is where Lean shines.</p>	<p>Lean offers a treasure trove of standardized processes and tools for nearly every organizational aspect, encompassing frontline staff, equipment, leadership, people development, material & information flow, and work performed at all levels. This comprehensive approach addresses not only immediate operational needs but also additional capabilities such as structured strategy deployment, process management, and robust problem-solving.</p>	<p>Lean's philosophy revolves around the powerful synergy of Purpose x Process x People, empowering individuals to "Problem-Solve their way to achieve purpose". This methodology naturally fosters trust, shared consciousness, and empowerment, vital elements for organizational success. Furthermore, change leadership is inherently woven into Lean's fabric, whereas the effectiveness of Team of Teams in managing business change is still unproven.</p>

Conclusion

In today's dynamic environment, companies benefit more from a scientific approach that leverages collective intelligence, fosters cross-departmental collaboration, prioritizes purpose-driven improvement, and empowers problem-solving at all levels. As the Comparison Matrix below shows, organizations implementing Team of Teams can significantly benefit from embracing Lean practices to optimize human capital & partnerships, deploy strategies effectively, solve problems, and build efficient processes—ultimately enhancing customer and employee satisfaction, engagement, and leadership capabilities.

		Lean and Team of Teams Frameworks								
		Leadership / Gardener	Common Purpose	Trust	Shared Consciousness	Empowered Execution	Process	People	Problem-Solving	
Tools and Methods	Lean	Leader Standard Work	⊙		○			○	○	○
		Process coaching ("Go See/A3 thinking")	⊙		○			⊙	○	○
		Strategy A3	○	⊙	○	○	⊙	○	○	⊙
		X-matrix diagram	○	⊙	○	⊙	○	○	○	○
		Catchball process (nemawashi)	○	⊙	○	⊙	○	○	○	○
		Tiered review meetings (obeya)	○	⊙	⊙	○	⊙	○	○	○
		Problem A3s + escalation process	○	○	○	○	⊙	⊙	○	⊙
		Value Stream Mapping	○	○	○	○	○	⊙	○	⊙
		The 4 rules of Lean DNA (Rules in Use)	○		○	○	○	⊙		⊙
		Operator Standard Work	○				○	⊙		⊙
		Kaizen (includes a long list of tools)	○		○		○	⊙		⊙
		Total Productive Maintenance (TPM)	○				○	⊙		○
		7 Quality Control and 7 management tools	○				○	⊙		⊙
		Managing for Daily Improvement	○		⊙	○	○	⊙	○	⊙
		Training Within Industry	○		○		○	○	⊙	○
		Scientific method (PDCA, 8Ds, A3s)	○		⊙	○	⊙	○	○	⊙
	Advanced problem-solving (DMAIC, CEDAC)	○		⊙	○	⊙	○	○	⊙	
	<i>Relationship score (sum of ⊙ and ○ symbols):</i>		17	6	14	10	15	17	12	17
	Team of Teams	Joint Operations Center	○		⊙	○	○			
		Weekly Operations Brief	○	○	⊙	○	○			
		Aligning narrative via participative workshops	○	⊙		○	○			
		KPI tracking	○	○				⊙		○
		Exchange program		○	○	⊙	○		○	
		Empowered execution program	⊙				⊙	○	○	○
		<i>Relationship score (sum of ⊙ and ○ symbols):</i>		5	4	3	4	5	2	2

Comparison Matrix: While a more comprehensive list of tools and methods could be presented, particularly for Lean, this table focuses on key, commonly used tools to provide a meaningful comparison of strengths.



Author Bios:

Nathan Holt

Nathan Holt is a seasoned expert in company turnarounds, having successfully transformed more than 25 businesses across various industries. He leverages his skills in strategy, culture transformation, continuous improvement, and leadership development to unlock billions in growth and hidden savings for his clients. He started his career at Accenture and Lean Horizons, where he learned how to deliver efficiency and stability for Fortune 500s facing growth and change challenges. He also worked closely with former Toyota and Danaher executives for 15 years, learning from their Lean business systems that are world-renowned for their success.

Nathan's in-house leadership roles at Avery Dennison and Office Depot in the mid-2000s helped restore their fiscal health, boost their workforce resilience, and reverse their declining stock trends. Since 2011, he has focused his expertise on the energy sector, working as a continuous improvement executive at Shell. In 2022, he founded Ultimate Performance (www.UltimatePerformance.biz), a consultancy that empowers energy companies to build operational excellence capability and high-performance cultures.

Nathan holds an MBA in international business and a bachelor's in industrial engineering. He is also a Shingo organizational excellence examiner and a M&A post-merger integration advisor, further demonstrating his credentials as a champion of lean excellence.

Tom Jackson

Tom Jackson is a recognized expert in Lean transformation and strategy deployment. He is a Lean leader and coach with experience on shopfloors and in board rooms of businesses all over the world. Tom published over ten books about lean and strategy deployment, several of which have been translated into multiple languages. His book, *Hoshin Kanri for the Lean Enterprise*, won the Shingo Prize for Research Excellence in 2006.

Tom began his career in an international joint venture with lean impresario Norman Bodek. Later, after joining Bodek's consulting firm, Productivity Inc, in the U.S., Tom designed lean leadership development programs for Ford, Whirlpool, Emerson and Adidas. After Bodek retired in 1998, Tom was appointed CEO and President of Productivity Inc and its sister company, Productivity Press.

In 2002, Tom cofounded taktX, a boutique consulting firm concentrating on the lean turnaround of distressed companies and focused improvement for multinational corporations. In 2008, Tom cofounded the Rona Consulting Group, a lean consulting firm serving large medical centers and healthcare systems. In 2022, Tom joined Ultimate Performance as a Senior Lean Advisor.

Tom holds a JD in commercial and tax law and a PhD and MBA in business economics.