

# LEANOhio

## Newsletter

### Featured Tool

– Michael Buerger, LeanOhio



#### The Lean Routine



When it comes to improvement, week-long Kaizen events are the approach of choice for achieving major results. But there's a quick-hitting approach as well – an approach that can be faster, more flexible, and more grassroots in nature.

We call it the Lean Routine. It uses many of the same tools that are put to work in a full week-long Kaizen event. The only key distinction is that the Lean Routine uses them on smaller processes and sub-processes. With Lean Routine, you narrow the scope of the improvement effort, and focus on clearly defined “pain points” that call for permanent improvement.

Lean Routines can be completed in one full day, five 90-minute meetings over the course of several weeks, or in two half-day meetings. The breaks in between meetings can be a big positive because they allow for additional data collection, problem-solving, and consensus building.

More information about the Lean Routine can be found [here](#).

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### Network Resource

– Michael Buerger, LeanOhio



#### Unwrapping the Gift of Feedback (Part 2)

Last month we featured some of the takeaways Mugsy Reynolds, Project Manager and Black Belt from the Department of Insurance, had from the Women's Leadership Forum at the OSU Fawcett Center. The speaker, Michelle Brown from CoverMyMeds, discussed how receiving feedback has shaped her personal and professional growth. Mugsy's takeaways focused on her role as a Project Manager and how receiving and providing feedback is an essential function of continuous improvement practices. This month we are sharing some of the takeaways the other attendees felt were important for personal growth.

Julie Finnegan, Green Belt with LeanOhio, said the presentation aligned very well with some of the teachings of Brené Brown, best-selling author, about being vulnerable, allowing yourself to hear honest feedback, and taking that feedback to heart. Far too often we find ourselves “doing the Ds”. Michelle Brown explained “doing the Ds” as being disengaged when we receive feedback; being dismissive, defensive, deflective, and diminishing either the impact of our actions or the value of the feedback provider’s opinion.

It can be hard to recognize when we are “doing the Ds”, but it is important to acknowledge when we are since this prevents us from really hearing what the problem is to the point that we never try to fix it. Usually, when we “do the Ds”, it means there is some truth to the feedback and we are triggered by something. It takes vulnerability to put down our defenses and listen, not only to hear, but with the intent to correct our actions. It means admitting we were wrong, and that is not something most humans do willingly.

Julie said hearing Ms. Brown talk about the Ds, directly calling out our behavior, made a lightbulb go off. Too many times has she seen this happen during a Lean event; someone starts shutting down, crossing their arms, disengaging from the process. Now, as a facilitator, Julie feels she has a better understanding of why people act this way and can reengage these participants by utilizing some of the skills and tools from Lean training and her role as a change management practitioner.

Karen Stone, Camo Belt with PUCO, elaborated on Michelle Brown’s presentation and the personal responses and challenges to accepting feedback. “As the Organizational Change Management lead for PUCO, I recognize that feedback is a request for someone to make a change. And since one of the goals of our organizational change management program is to empower employees to have a growth mindset when they approach any change that comes their way, I took careful notes on the tools we can use to assist our employees with navigating change.”

Every person responds differently to change or in this case, feedback. Being open to feedback and approaching these types of discussions with a growth mindset requires people to be vulnerable in their work environment, which is not always easy! Karen explained that when they look at what went well and what could be improved on a project, it is easier to be reflective since the project is external, something outside of ourselves. “However, being reflective about our own skills, thoughts and behaviors and asking others what we do well or how we can improve personally can be difficult” Karen said.

Receiving constructive feedback may trigger an unpleasant reaction inside our minds. The feedback can create a negative response because:

- 1) There’s some truth to it
- 2) The who and what are entangled; in other words, there are underlying relationship issues
- 3) The feedback threatens your identity
- 4) You have a fear of change
- 5) You fear you cannot change; that is, you fear you cannot incorporate the feedback

To help individuals process difficult feedback, Michelle shared a writing exercise. First, write down the feedback and describe it in terms of observable behaviors. Then, answer the following questions:

- 1) Were you triggered? If so, why?

- 2) What impact does the behavior have?
- 3) What are you getting out of the behavior?

Karen said “As a practitioner of organizational change management and Lean, I am involved with many of the change initiatives in our agency. I plan to incorporate the feedback tools from this presentation to help people who may find it difficult to receive feedback or deal with change.”

Sara Molski, Green Belt at the Ohio Department of Higher Education, agrees with both Karen and Julie. “As a self-proclaimed perfectionist, it can be easy to look at feedback as negative and a criticism. I will then overanalyze the feedback and let it snowball, making far too big of a deal of what was shared. It is then easy to start “doing the Ds” instead of taking the feedback to heart and learning from it.”

Far too often we allow feedback to deny our self-worth. However, feedback, even sensitive or painful, helps us in the long run. Sara explained that when she looks back, usually the feedback she received that felt hurtful at the time ended up helping her grow. She can now look back and be grateful that someone took the time to share areas for improvement openly and honestly. After hearing Ms. Brown speak, Sara said she is now ready to not only receive feedback with an open mind but is better prepared to give more constructive feedback to others. “It was a fantastic presentation. You know it was a good session when you find yourself constantly reflecting on the takeaways, even several weeks after you heard it. I’m grateful we have the opportunity to attend these sessions on behalf of LeanOhio.”

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## Certifications (Editorial) – Scot Burbacher, LeanOhio

### Apples, Oranges, and Other Food Metaphors

In the past six years, since I first embarked upon my own Lean journey, I’ve encountered a handful of individuals who have voiced a particular sentiment or curiosity about the nature of LeanOhio’s training and certification. This sentiment has been expressed in a variety of different ways, and at different levels of subtlety or directness. In general, the sentiment I’m referring to goes something like this:

***I’m curious about how LeanOhio certification stacks up against other certification providers. Is it a legitimate certification that employers or practitioners outside of the State of Ohio would even consider valid? Will it be worth my time and effort to be certified by LeanOhio, or would I be better off going through an external provider?***

Based on the way most professional certifications work, I suppose I can’t blame someone for having reservations about whether a LeanOhio certification carries much weight outside the bubble of employment by the State of Ohio. In response to that skepticism, we need look no further than a familiar Six Sigma mantra: Y is a function of X. In this case, I mean to say that the value of your certification is a function of the effort you put into it. This can be said of ANY professional certification,

but it holds especially true for Six Sigma certifications. To understand why this is, we need to shed a bit of light on the “apples and oranges” comparison that often underlies the sentiments above.

The fact of the matter is that any given Six Sigma certification (no matter the provider) is fundamentally different from most other well-known professional certifications. To illustrate this difference, let’s look at the widely-recognized Project Management Professional (PMP) certification. Attached to this certification is a single body of knowledge that candidates must receive training on, a single exam one must pass, and a single set of professional experience requirements one must meet. Each of these moving parts are owned, maintained and governed by one single entity known as the Project Management Institute (PMI), Inc. Though there are several providers licensed by PMI to train and certify on their behalf, this tightly-controlled universe and the quality standards established within it make it fairly safe to form an educated assumption about the expertise of any given PMP-certified individual. It’s a bit like McDonalds: it’s a name that’s widely recognized; and for the most part, no matter which location you go to, a Big Mac is a Big Mac is a Big Mac.

Continuing with the hamburger analogy, Six Sigma certification providers are more like a wide assortment of unique, locally-owned, non-franchise burger joints: each place will have its own level of popularity and reputation amongst the local foodies; and while any of them can make you a hamburger, variables such as toppings, quality and cost will all certainly be different from one place to another. In the universe of Six Sigma, a central source of ownership and governance simply does not exist. There are certification providers who are certainly more widely recognized in the industry, such as the American Society for Quality (ASQ) or the International Association for Six Sigma Certification (IASSC), and this wide recognition may lead some to assume that they hold control over a unified body of knowledge and certification requirements, but this is simply not the case. Any given Six Sigma certification provider stipulates their own body of knowledge and certification requirements, which could be as close to or as divergent from the original Motorola standards as they deem appropriate. As you might guess, this paradigm has left us with a broad spectrum of certifying bodies in terms of quality standards and reputability. While ASQ and IASSC certainly anchor the more favorable end of the spectrum, the opposite end is composed of questionable operations that offer quick, cheap certifications with a bare minimum of qualifications to attain. If your sense of irony is starting to twinge a bit like an ice-cream headache, it wouldn’t be surprising: for a discipline that embraces standardization and shuns variation, its corresponding landscape of certifying bodies is anything but standardized and is fraught with more flavors than a Baskin-Robbins.

Navigating this veritable buffet spread can be a bit daunting. For those trying to weigh their options on who they can trust for a certification that will carry value, allow me to point out to you an important distinction: there are the certification initials that you’d get to add to your email signature, and then there is the actual expertise that those initials would imply. It is the expertise gained in your journey that truly matters. This is why the more reputable certification providers have loftier requirements for certification, typically involving the completion of projects, multiple years of on-the-job experience, as well as periodic re-certification every few years. In turn, these high standards probably have something to do with why these providers are more reputable within the global Lean Six Sigma community in the first place.

In terms of how LeanOhio’s offerings compare to other sources, I would argue that Ohio’s state employees have a pretty sweet deal available to them. LeanOhio’s body of knowledge, training and certification was initially developed in partnership with a certified Master Black Belt from the Cintas

Corporation (who have a respectable Lean Six Sigma deployment of their own). Our body of knowledge and certification programs were tailored to meet the needs of the state and its employees, and we continue to adapt and refine our body of knowledge as our operational landscape changes. Certification at Camo, Green and Black Belt levels carry appropriate degrees of rigor, with Black Belt level requiring agency leadership approval, an accumulated five weeks of training, passing an exam, completion of a robust DMAIC project, and a presentation of the completed project to a panel of LeanOhio-certified Black Belts. Additionally, candidates of our certification program benefit from the knowledge, opportunities and support from our massive statewide Network of Lean-trained practitioners. And the cherry on top of this already delicious sundae: our trainings and certifications are available at no cost to state employees or their agencies. Like I said: it's a pretty sweet deal!

To wrap up this whole burrito: the provider you earn your certification from is not nearly as consequential as what you do with those skills once you have it (or on your road to attaining it). It is your demonstratable experience and mastery of Lean Six Sigma skills that truly drives the value of your certification. As I've heard it said before: a certification may land you the interview, but it won't land you the job.

It's up to you to continually hone your skills, build your experience, and make your certification truly count for something. Keep learning, keep investigating, keep practicing, keep improving.

Stay hungry, my friends.

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## Upcoming Events

[Green Belt Training](#): September 30 – October 3, 2019

[OSU COE Event](#): October 8, 2019

[OSU COE Event](#): October 18, 2019

[Belt Presentations](#): October 29, 2019

[LeanOhio Boot Camp](#): November 4 – 7, 2019



“Practice isn’t the thing you do once you’re good. It’s the thing you do that makes you good.”

-- Malcolm Gladwell, *Author of ‘The Tipping Point’*

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Ideas or feedback? Please send to [leanohio@das.ohio.gov](mailto:leanohio@das.ohio.gov)

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