

# Lean Focus



## 10 Leadership Behaviors to Foster a Lean Culture

By Damon Baker

The challenge with fostering a lean culture is that it is difficult to sustain when top leadership does not understand "what good looks like", or when they engage in defeatist behaviors that undermine our progress.

CEOs and Presidents **MUST** fully embrace their role as the "exemplar" lean leader in order to stand a fighting chance at building a lean culture that lasts. To achieve this, the leader must show the organization the way by getting involved in the process – leading by example.

"The three most important ways to lead people are:... by example... by example... by example."

Albert Schweitzer

There are many ways leaders can set a "good" example to the organization, but here are 10 to get you started:

1. Participate and lead business-critical Kaizen events and improvement activities.
2. Routinely coach others in effective problem solving behaviors in Daily Management, Strategy Deployment, and Kaizen settings.
3. Regularly engage associates at all levels, especially frontline associates, to form a complete view of the situation, understand what challenges exist, and help remove barriers.
4. Support and promote continuous improvement activities company-wide by taking an active participation and leadership role in setting the agenda and priorities.
5. Establish goals and objectives for your direct reports to engage in continuous improvement activities and follow up with them regularly to reflect on lessons learned.
6. Take every opportunity to reinforce the message at all levels as to the importance of building and sustaining a continuous improvement culture.
7. Stretch the organization at multiple levels to achieve ever-increasing levels of performance year-over-year. Create "productive tension".
8. Commit to a never-ending learning journey to sharpen your skill set as a lean leader. If you are not learning, you are not growing as a leader.
9. Routinely follow up to ensure continuous improvement activities are sustained and step in with the proper level of support when they are not.
10. Regularly ask for feedback from all levels of the organization as to how you can become a better lean leader.

When you lead by example, you create a picture of what's possible. People can look at you and say, "Well, if he can do it, I can do it." When you lead by example, you make it easy for others to follow you.

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### BACKGROUND

Damon is the President & CEO of Lean Focus. For over 25 years, he has been implementing lean in consulting, operations, continuous improvement, and GM & VP-level leadership roles for such companies as Danaher, HNI, Eaton, Argo Consulting, Experian, and Winegard.

Trained by disciples of the Toyota Production System, he worked in a Shingo Prize winning facility and is a Shingo Prize Examiner. Over his career he has demonstrated hands-on leadership and facilitation of 500+ kaizen events for 50 major corporations in 16 different countries. Damon led the North American Danaher Business System Office. While at Danaher, one of his mentored operating companies was nominated Most Improved Plant, and one of his factories won Best Plant Worldwide 2 years in a row. Damon holds an MBA from St. Ambrose University and a Bachelors of Arts in Management and Marketing from Iowa Wesleyan University.

### INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

Aerospace and Defense, Automotive, Electronics, Capital Equipment, Chemicals, Protective Packaging, Residential Construction Materials, Water Quality, Dental, Test & Measurement, Sheet Metal Fabrication, Life Sciences, Medical Devices, Discrete Assembly, Oil and Gas.

### LEAN EXPERIENCE

Building/Installing Problem Solving & Kaizen Cultures, Operational Due Diligence, Acquisition Integration, Strategic Planning & Policy Deployment, Sales Force Efficiency & Effectiveness Tools, Pricing Margin Analysis, Transactional Kaizen, EBITDA focused operational improvements, Cellular Manufacturing, 6S & Visual Management, Standardized Work, Mistake Proofing (Poka Yoke), Visual Controls, Setup Reduction (SMED), Total Productive Maintenance (TPM), Daily Management Processes, Leader Standard Work, Working Capital reduction via Kanban & Pull Based Inventory tools, DSO Reduction, and Accounts Payable processes, Value Analysis & Engineering, 3P, Accelerated Product Development Tools.

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