

# Second Virtual Lean Mini-Conference • 15 October 2020

Hosted by Bob Emiliani

## **Summary of Lean Mini-Conference Points and Counterpoints**

# Challenging the Status Quo

Why?  
Because Progress  
is Good



**Raise the Bar!**

## Free Virtual Lean Mini-Conference

*Why Pay \$2000 for the Same Old Dull Lean Conference?*

**→ Engage in Substantive Intellectual Inquiry Instead ←**

**Facilitator: Dr. Bob Emiliani**  
**When: 15 October 2020, 7:30 to 10:30 am**  
**Eastern U.S. Time (break at 8:45 am)**  
**Where: Zoom**

**Who: About 20 People**  
**Register at [bobemiliani.com/virtual-lean-mini-conference/](http://bobemiliani.com/virtual-lean-mini-conference/)**  
**Why: Progress is Good**

**Set a New Standard!**

### Interactive Conversations on Topics Such As...

**Classical Leadership**  
**Classical Management**  
**Lean Leadership**  
**Lean Management**  
**Kaizen for Problem-Solving**  
**Secret Lean**  
**The Business of Lean**  
**The Current State of Lean**  
**The Future of Lean**  
**Alternatives to Lean**

**And Let's Try to Answer Some Crazy Interesting Practical Questions**

- Is Lean dying?
- Is Productivity Improvement Still Needed?
- Is Cost Reduction Still Needed?
- Do You Really Need a Coach?
- Is A4 More Important Than A3?
- Is Toyota Still Relevant?
- What Happens When Facts Don't Matter?
- Has Lean Become a Secular Religion?
- Has the Cult of Personality Harmed Lean?
- Why Was Diversity So Slow in Coming to Lean?
- Has Lean Been Absorbed into Classical Management?

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Purpose: 1. Focused exploration of ideas, 2. Challenge our thinking, 3. Raise the level of intellectual discourse, 4. Step outside the Lean groupthink bubble, 5. Learn from each other, 6. Develop self

## Conference Questions to Explore

Is Lean transformation still relevant? YES! or NO!

Do you really need a Lean coach? YES! or NO!

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## Process

Group A, Question 1. Any teams were formed to answer Question 1? Please share your answer(s) for/against (yes/no). No teams? Individuals share your answers.

Group B, Question 1. Any teams were formed to answer Question 1? Please share your answer(s) for/against (yes/no) No teams? Individuals share your answers.

Same for Question 2

## Method

Argument • Counterargument • Discussion • Learning

# Group A Summary Responses

## Question 1: Is Lean Transformation Still Relevant? YES!

- Still relevant because so few business leaders grasp the concept; the best is always in the future
- Focusing on KPIs and people causes more harm than good, so there remain a need to focus on process
- People who engage with Lean see work differently, are motivated - builds confidence for change and improvement
- Develops critical thinking – which is a must for real process improvement. Continuous improvement environment, produces never-ending application of improvement ideas which reduce cost, better view how the business running, and stop being firefighting
- Because will help the organization to focus only on what really adds value to its customers
- All systems degrade over time, so there is a constant need to keep maintaining and improving the work
- Since the speed of change keeps increasing, (increasing speed of) flow is relevant
- Continuous improvement, based on Lean, is a common and natural desire for humans and should be also for systems
- Speaking about Industry 4.0 - those are just new means to apply “old tools” of Lean
- The lessons learned give valuable experience and now the access to best practices is facile than ever - a lot of information and examples are available. Just to "google", understand and apply. Inspiration is surrounding us.
- Companies need mechanisms to cope with big problems like COVID. Employees saw great potential, but execs did not.
- Cost pressure on public services, e. g. hospitals, public transport or schools.

# Emiliani's Arguments

## Question 1: Is Lean Transformation Still Relevant? YES!

- Current classical management practice outdated and unsustainable
- The world has changed and demands a new comprehensive progressive management practice
- Over time, more leaders will acknowledge the problem and accept the need for Lean transformation
- Business is slowly evolving towards a participative model: self-managed teams, which is best achieved via Lean transformation
- It will be increasingly more difficult for classical management to deliver the expected financial and non-financial gains
- Customers require ever-more and ever-better innovation, speed, and low prices, which Lean transformation can best deliver – customers will drive business leaders to Lean transformation
- The costs externalized to society and the environment by classical management will grow too high and business leaders (and politicians?) will look seriously at the alternatives
- Lean transformation will deliver a more balanced set of gains to society
- But the government may have to incentivize business leaders to transition to Lean management, or enforce existing laws that could help nudge leaders towards Lean transformation

# Group B Summary Responses

## Question 1: Is Lean Transformation Still Relevant? NO!

- It has lost its importance over the time due to: 1. No standard framework, 2. Toyota achieved what they are now through trial-and-error methods, 3. Lean has become irrelevant due to it's thousands of versions available in the market. Rather, call it company specific Improvement journey
- In a lot of cases Lean transformation is an attempt of copying TPS tools without the Toyota culture
- Companies tend to flock to Lean in times of crisis. During these times there is too great of a tendency to operate by classical financial management and putting out fires
- Misinterpretation has narrowed Lean's scope and leaders see irrelevant tools and nothing else
- High failure rate of Lean transformations
- Lack of knowledge standard and true lean experience for most coaches, which leads to bad transformation attempts
- Lean has not been embraced other communities and causes alienation
- Lean is mostly implemented as a set of tools and therefore misses the true intent of Lean
- Lean emphasizes long term improvement in a world that is chasing short term profit
- Lean (as applied by most consultants) is mostly a commodity business looking for revenue not helping much with transformation
- Important information not being added to the Lean body of knowledge; makes Lean transformation less relevant
- Why head down a path that is likely to result in failure?

# Emiliani's Arguments

## Question 1: Is Lean Transformation Still Relevant? NO!

- There is virtually no demand from leaders for Lean transformation – so stop begging leaders to change
- There is no demand for Lean transformation from employees, investors, or society
- Leaders do not like the idea that “everything must change”
- Peer leaders are not interested in Lean transformation
- Leaders do not like to challenge their world-views
- Lean transformation is an ambiguous process
- Lean transformation is too complex
- Lean transformation takes too long
- Lean transformation is too difficult to sustain
- There is confusion over the focus of Lean transformation: kaizen or “Lean thinking”
- JIT and similar foci on “efficiency” are often blamed in the press for not delivering the desired results, so leaders are wise to avoid it
- Lean management has suffered too many stumbles and made transformation irrelevant
- Leaders greatly prefer the tried and tested traditions of leadership and management
- Those who have led Lean transformations have been largely ineffective in convincing other leaders to do likewise
- You don't need Lean transformation to be a successful business



# Group A Summary Responses

## Question 2: Do You Really Need a Lean Coach? YES!

- Need a coach, mentor, or “sensei” to guide us, because they have more experience to share
- Coach is needed especially for all those which are at the beginning of a new activity or new process
- Best practice come from "history" and experience is one of the most valuable asset of the present and future
- Coaches already know the do and don'ts; help you avoid/reduce frustration by asking right questions
- Coaches motivates to build their knowledge base and confidence to make improvements
- Need coach to look at the big picture and focus improvements when people get bogged down
- Coach brings experience of what has gone before – why things did or didn't work.
- Coaches bring a common discipline across the business
- A coach should be a mentor, which means mentor-mentor relationship, both are learning from each other
- To see exemplary behavior & set the standard (not accepting the unacceptable); clarify expectations
- For accountability – people do what you inspect, not what you expect. For the right focus (questions!), tips & guidance. For challenge and encouragement (the knowing-doing gap). Feedback from an outsider view. Destroy your preconceptions. Critique performance if you're not self-critical enough. Push you to find a solution for yourself. For reminders – we all forget/deviate
- You need feedback for your actions. You might learn a lot from passive sources like books. But only if you do it you get feedback. You need a person who can spot the difference. Might be more neutral than peers or bosses
- Without a Lean coach there is no one who is allowed to demand thinking even in turbulent times

# Emiliani's Arguments

## Question 2: Do You Really Need a Lean Coach? YES!

- Coaches are necessary to help people break free of their preconceptions
- Coaches are necessary because it is nearly impossible to learn Lean by one's self
- Coaches transmit valuable tacit knowledge gained from their extensive hands-on experience
- Coaches are indispensable because they teach and reinforce the specific and unique ways of thinking that produce the desired business and human development results
- Experienced coaches help guide the learners and speeds up the pace of improvement
- Coaches develop human potential which continuously increases the value of employees
- Coaches develop obligational human relations that transfer valuable tacit and explicit learning from one generation to another
- Coaches create valuable memorable experience and life-long bonds
- Coaches are necessary for Lean transformation success

# Group B Summary Responses

## Question 2: Do You Really Need a Lean Coach? NO!

- Leaders are seldom self-motivated in with Lean, so they do not like to (or cannot) coach
- External coaches are trying to sell a service when they may not fully understand Lean thinking
- When coaches are gone, so is the Lean initiative
- Bad coaches do a lot of damage/demotivation
- Coaches don't know what you need to get better
- Dependency/over-reliance on coach - not thinking for themselves; 'wait for the manager/coach/next program', you need to be self-critical
- Knowledge ≠ Execution
- Leader should be coach, but they purchase your way out of problem, 'check-in-the-box' (they outsource coaching)
- You can read the book yourself
- (Agile) coaches distract from the real work with all their practices
- Explicit understanding << implicit understanding (from suffering)
- Nobody has patience anyway
- Just experiment for yourself
- The word "coach" does not quite explain the role. It is more like coach/mentor/teacher who challenges you to do-do-do-do and keep doing. It's not about being nice or
- The term "sensei" is now being abused to denote expertise

# Emiliani's Arguments

## Question 2: Do You Really Need a Lean Coach? NO!

- In the early days people were given a challenge with an unknown pathway and answer, and directed to figure out how to solve the problem and improve via trial-and-error experimentation – this still works today
- You can learn Lean management without a coach; go on your own path of discovery and learning
- Learning how to critique one's self and take action is more valuable than relying on a coach who one day will no longer be there for you
- There are myriad low cost / no cost resources available that can take the place of a coach (self-coaching)
- Most coaches lack the experience needed to coach effectively
- A coach that knows something about Lean is not the same thing as a coach who has done things such as creating a flowline or kanban system, built rightsized equipment, led kaizens, etc.
- Just because you are a boss does not make you a capable or effective Lean coach
- People quickly forget what their coaches say
- Coaching does not work in organizations where leaders lack patience – better off coaching yourself
- Companies and people have succeeded without coaches
- Most people don't listen to coaches; they do whatever they want or what they think is best given the situation
- Coaching can have the perverse effect of people relying on others for learning and thus not thinking for themselves (leaders delegate/subcontract coaching) – and thus fail to produce a succession of evermore capable coaches

# Final Thoughts

- We had a great Second Virtual Lean Mini-Conference. Achieved each of the six points of Purpose (see Slide #2). Raised the bar on how to conduct a Lean conference and engage people in challenging questions!
- Expanded our thinking by opposing our normal viewpoints
- Learned new and diverse perspectives
- Had a few laughs and some fun!
- Participants really like the format – everyone speaks, no bullying, no selling, lots of sharing
- Third free Virtual Lean Mini-Conference will be 6 November (max = 30 people) with a different pair of provocative questions. Details to follow

**Thank you to all who participated!**