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Selected Articles

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# Becoming a Customer Focused Organization

BY JANET DOZIER-DAVIS

While at a recent site visit of a remarkable healthcare system that has been engaged in Lean for over a decade, the CEO made a statement that I found to be quite intriguing. When asked about Lean deployment within the organization, he commented, “It’s everyone’s job to make sure their customer’s needs are met.” On numerous occasions I’ve heard the saying, It’s everyone job to do their job and secondly, improve their job. But the comment made by this CEO was slightly different and touched a chord within me because this minute variation to a common phrase keeps the customer as the focal point and provides purpose as to why everyone’s job, regardless of role or title, is important. This small variation personalizes the activities of each of his employees and effectively transfers ownership of providing value to the customer to no one other than oneself. Practicing the mantra of “the customer is counting on me; not the next person” embeds a sense of responsibility that goes above merely showing up to do a job. It goes to ensuring that every activity, every day contributes to what the customer needs, when they need it.

We know that Lean is customer focused. Indeed, focus on customer is the heart of Lean principles

with the concept of continuously improving to better deliver value to the customer. Seems simple but, keeping this goal in front of everyone, every day, on every decision is not an easy task. It requires tremendous leadership and commitment to organizational development and learning. However, when this type of relentless focus on serving customer needs permeates an organization, it leads to an ability to extract extraordinary contributions from everyone and engagement at all levels.

Lean Healthcare has the ability to transform your employees into an army of problem-solvers. To realize this opportunity, make sure that your employees are properly equipped with skills and tools such as A3 problem solving, visual management systems and rapid improvement events, to name a few. Lean tools along with Lean leadership can move your organization towards one in which everyone believes it’s their job to make sure their customer’s needs are met.



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