



Lean Seeds: Cultivating a Lean Culture

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November, 2015

Culture: According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2015), culture is defined as “a way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization”. How would you describe your organization’s culture? Would everyone in the organization describe it the same way?

With the constant changes and dynamic atmosphere of healthcare, it is essential to tap into the talents and expertise available at all levels of an organization. Creating a Lean culture provides the common language and tools necessary to reframe how we think about problem solving at all levels. We must encourage, train, and nurture those closest to the work to grow their abilities to solve problems and to implement improvements.

In order to truly cultivate a Lean way of thinking, new skills must be learned at all levels. It is easy to teach the language and theory of Lean; but to have a lasting effect, the principles must be in constant use and there must be continual learning and expertise developed within the organization. Teaching a Lean class to all employees or providing an overview of Lean terminology and theory is a start but it will not lead to a lasting change until Lean is a way of thinking, behaving, or working throughout the organization.

Gardening Tips: Whether you have already begun a Lean journey or are moving in that direction, it is important to assess and reassess the ground regularly. This assessment can only be done in one place – at the front lines where the work is happening. The practice of going to where the work is happening and simply observing the behaviors and the work being done without intervening or judging is extremely valuable and very difficult. Leaders at all levels – formal and informal - can learn this skill. It all starts with practice. There is no time like the present. In the midst of our busy days, we must carve out some time to go where the work is being done and just watch then reflect on what was seen. Did you see something you didn't expect? What did you learn? Resist the urge to jump in with any quick fixes!

For more information on the power of observation, watch our website for a series on Lean coming in 2016: www.HealthTechS3.com and feel free to reach out to me if I can be of any assistance to you or your organization to cultivate a Lean culture.

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