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January 2009

# Institute for Lean Systems Newsletter

## January 2009 Issue

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### Quick Links and Upcoming Events

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**Applying Lean Across the Supply Chain Workshop, February 23 - 27, 2009, Penn State University, State College, PA.**

[Register](#)

**Lean Executive Short Course workshop, March 18 - 19, 2009, Hilton Garden Inn, Georgetown, Kentucky.**

[Register](#)

**Japan Study Mission III, April 17 - 25, 2009.**

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**ILS Lean Operational Excellence Certification Series, Begins May 2009**

[Register today](#)

**Stay tuned! We're launching a course on lean and environmental sustainability March 17 - 18, 2009 in Louisville! More details will follow in a special announcement coming soon.**

**For more information about any of these programs, [click here](#).**

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**Dear David,**

Happy holidays!

This is the time of year when we focus on change. We've made our New Year's resolutions. Soon we'll be welcoming a new President into the White House - a president who based his entire campaign on change.

We Americans embrace change, don't we?

Well, actually . . . no, we don't. In fact, just the opposite is true. We do everything in our power to resist change - even when it's change that's in our best interest.

Don't believe me? Then check out the book *Change or Die* by Alan Deutschman.

This 2007 business classic cites numerous examples of how people resist change. For instance, a Johns Hopkins University study found that of the 600,000 Americans who undergo heart-bypass surgery every year, 90 percent do not change their lifestyles. "Even though they know they have a very bad disease, and they know they should change their lifestyle, for whatever reason, they can't," the study concluded.

Nor is that an isolated example. Consider the high recidivism rate among prison inmates. A 15-year study by the U.S. Department of Justice found that over 2/3 of released prisoners were re-arrested within three years. Harsher penalties such as "three strikes" laws that lead to permanent incarceration - or even the death penalty - seem to have little deterrent effect.

Changing people's behavior isn't just a social challenge. It's the most important challenge for businesses trying to compete in a turbulent world, says John Kotter, a Harvard Business School professor who has studied dozens of organizations in the midst of upheaval.

"The central issue is never strategy, structure, culture, or systems," Kotter says. "The core of the matter is always about changing the behavior of people."

CEOs are supposed to be the prime change agents for their companies, but they're often as resistant to change as anyone,



notes Deutschman.

So what's the answer? In our next newsletter, I'll talk about some steps you can take to promote and facilitate change in your organization.

Oh, and about those New Year's resolutions? A University of Minnesota study found that six weeks into the new year, 80 percent of people have already broken their New Year's resolutions or can't even remember them anymore. Don't be one of those. Let us help!

Happy New Year!

## Crossing the Chocolate River

About 80 visitors to the world's largest boat-builders exposition got a different kind of boating experience in October: They got to ride a graham-cracker raft across a chocolate river.

It was all part of a team-building seminar conducted by the Institute for Lean Systems at COMITT and IBEX 2008 (the Conference on Marine Institute Technical Training and the International BoatBuilders Exhibition and Conference) held Oct. 6-8 in Miami Beach.

ILS Executive Director David Veech led several groups through a series of challenging games and activities designed to improve cooperation and cohesiveness.

Team building is important because teams allow organizations to involve their workforce in the decision-making and improvement of the workplace. Teams maximize the potential and mitigate the risk of empowering employees.

But organizations can't simply throw a diverse group of people together and expect them to perform at a high level. Teams must be built.

ILS team-building exercises were designed and developed by leading experts in group dynamics and organization development

One ILS exercise at the IBEX show involved two teams having to swap sides across a center square without passing a fellow team member. Team members had to either step forward to the empty square or step around an opposing team member headed in the opposite direction. The exercise is difficult, but do-able - if teams follow the rules. The difficulty builds frustration and can even generate conflict, but learning how to resolve internal conflicts is an important part of team building.

Team-building games and activities might seem like just goofing off, but they perform critical trust-building and confidence-building functions. ILS team-building workshops might be just what your internal teams need to jumpstart their performance. Whether it's a new product design team, a marketing and sales team, continuous improvement project team, or a leadership team, ILS can improve their performance and drive better results, all while having a little fun.

For more information on how ILS can help you maximize your workforce potential through team building, contact

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PENNSTATE



SMEAL College of Business

Applying Lean Principles Across the Supply Chain:  
A 4-day workshop conducted in a unique partnership between ILS and Penn State University. [Register today](#) for our February 23 - 27 Course held in State College, Pennsylvania

Thank you for being a subscribed member of this newsletter, and keeping up with the Institute for Lean Systems. We hope to hear from you soon, and appreciate your support over the years.

**Sincerely,**

David Veech  
Executive Director  
Institute for Lean Systems

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