

# IMPACT

of 2 Second Lean

*Real stories from people around the world, sharing the powerful impact of 2 Second Lean.*



# IMPACT

of 2 Second Lean

A collection of stories  
from people all over the  
world.

Paul A. Akers



Copyright © 2023 by FastCap Press  
All rights reserved,  
including the right of reproduction  
in whole or in part in any form.

Paul Akers: Voxer or Signal (+13609413748)  
Emails will be deleted

Manufactured in the United States of America

## **2 Second Lean comes in ALL flavors**

You can read it or get even more insight by watching the videos and reviewing the resources on PaulAkers.net. Or listen to the expanded Audio-Book with extra “off-script” inspiration and added stories of innovation.

**Check out PaulAkers.net for all  
the latest Lean Adventures**



**Check out my new app *2 Second Lean Play!*  
This new app gives you access to all of Paul's  
audiobooks for FREE!!!**

*Available in the App Store & Google Play*

## *Acknowledgments*

*Simone Caneparo*

This book would never be possible without the incredible influence of my amazing and talented friend Simoni. Several years ago, Simoni approached me with the idea of writing a book on the *10th Anniversary of 2 Second Lean*.

He said, “Paul you should put together a book that celebrates the amazing leaders who lead Lean cultural transformations in organizations around the world.”

### *2 Second Lean Community*

Finally, we got it done with the help of all my friends from all over the *2 Second Lean* community worldwide. The book is finally done.

Thank you for everyone’s hard work, patience, and diligence.

I hope the stories that follow in these pages will inspire everyone to a life of daily relentless improvement!

Thanks  
Paul

# Contents

Preface	1
Story 1: Adam Allen & Danny Birkes	6
Story 2: Alex Ramirez	10
Story 3: Alex Tesenkov	17
Story 4: Alikhan Sapargailyev	22
Story 5: Allen Hewitt	29
Story 6: Amir Abouzeid	36
Story 7: Arek	40
Story 8: Ashley J Bailey	44
Story 9: Bernard Powell	48
Story 10: Bottoms Up Team	61
Story 11: Brad Cairnes	68
Story 12: Brannon Burton	70
Story 13: Brian Roesch	73
Story 14: Brian Way	75
Story 15: Chris Hotze	81
Story 16: Clyde Libolt	84
Story 17: Dave Lelonek	86
Story 18: Dave Weckwerth	91
Story 19: David Endacott	96
Story 20: Derrek Holland	101
Story 21: Filipe Marques	103
Story 22: Gen Vagula	105
Story 23: George Patrinos	109
Story 24: Glenn Bostock	117
Story 25: Granger Forson	118
Story 26: Hugh Carnahan	121
Story 27: Isaac Fuller	125
Story 28: Jack Bussey	128
Story 29: Jason Schroeder	135
Story 30: John Yamat	143
Story 31: Lukas Holland	146

# Contents continued

Story 32:	Lyle Hughs	153
Story 33:	Marc Braun	160
Story 34:	Mark Irvine	162
Story 35:	Max Maker	164
Story 36:	Michael Althoff	170
Story 37:	Noel Glymond	172
Story 38:	Patrick Magee	175
Story 39:	Richard Evans	178
Story 40:	Richard Fuller	182
Story 41:	Rick Egelin	186
Story 42:	Ryan Tierney	194
Story 43:	Sean Miller	195
Story 44:	Sebastian McLeod	199
Story 45:	Shawn Gross	204
Story 46:	Simone Caneparo	208
Story 47:	Ted Pancoast	211
Story 48:	Thomas Riner	214
Story 49:	Tom Hughes	218



## ADAM ALLEN & DANNY BIRKES

CO-OWNERS • PRESTIGE WOODWORKS • CUSTOM CABINETS

Before reading *2 Second Lean* our cabinet business functioned about as well as any other construction trade...poorly, VERY poorly. My business partner and I were good at the technical aspects of building cabinets but neither of us had ever run a business or thought through better ways of working. We simply knew what worked from our past woodshop jobs and continued to imitate the work ethic as we went.

During the first couple of years of business, we would get a cabinet job and start attacking it.

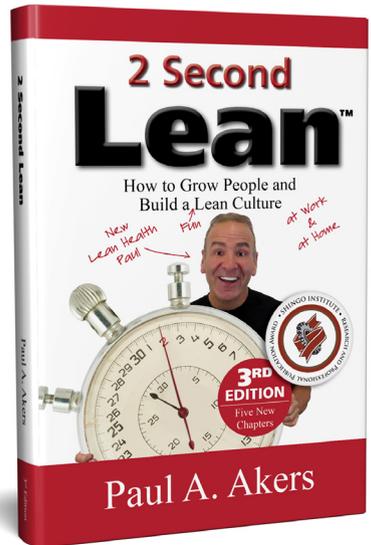
### OUR PROCESSES WENT LIKE SO:

- 1 - We would plan for days;
- 2 - Cut hardwood for all the cabinets;
- 3 - Build face frames and drawer boxes for everything;
- 4 - Spray the frames, doors, and boxes;
- 5 - Cut melamine box parts for days; and
- 6 - Stack, move, wrap, organize (damage) and shuffle the hundreds of parts as we built the cabinets, filling the shop with finished parts but no finished cabinets.

Sadly, along the way, we would find out that our planning wasn't as stellar as we had hoped. We would eventually have tons of finished cabinets with no idea where to put them. We never knew how long it would take us to accomplish a job. We had no idea how to track time. We would simply chalk it up to the fact that custom cabinets are custom and therefore unpredictable. After all, how can you standardize custom?

Our very first kitchen was a small basement addition for a friend of a friend. There were only about 15 or so cabinets. Once we got done with the separate processes and tried to put the cabinets together, we found that nearly 50% of the cabinets had major planning flaws that forced us to rebuild major portions. Of course, we learned from our mistakes as we went along but we continued grinding our gears in the same way for nearly 2 years.

One day a loving and helpful hardware salesman, Ben Packer, decided to show us a better way. He suggested we read *2 Second Lean* and *The Goal*. After reading these two books we changed our business, our lives, and we never looked back. We immediately began to implement Lean practices such as 3Sing and morning meetings. We began to create a predictable output of 5 cabinets a day with just the two of us. Although it was a batch flow it worked so much better than smashing an entire job through at once. With this change, a cabinet build went from a couple month job to a couple week job without any help! To put it simply, we began to think. In just a few years we progressed to about 15 employees and 30 cabinets a day and have plans to do a whole lot more than that.



Prestige Woodworks most likely would have failed without the habits that *2 Second Lean* instilled in our workplace culture. If

we had survived, we would have probably been building cabinets till we were old and moldy with no hope of retirement. We were so grateful to have caught the bug before we had employees so we could create a culture together and then bring people into an already progressing culture. Due to the influence and mentality of *2 Second Lean*, we are able to speed up our processes and get a tiny bit closer to a true one-piece flow. We have so much fun tinkering and fixing our processes but we are now learning the most important and challenging part of Lean: other people. This new horizon is stretching our abilities and forcing us and our business to grow even more.

Thanks so much, Paul, for preaching the word and sharing everything you've learned in such a selfless, frictionless, Lean way, to change as many lives as possible. It has changed our lives so drastically and we try to spread the word with everyone we come in contact with.

## ADAM ALLEN

The Lean mentality hit me hard. It quite literally flipped a switch in my brain so hard that I didn't sleep for an entire week. I ended up being admitted to the "nut house" for a couple of days (true story). Although I did in fact go a little "looney", my life was permanently changed for the better.

Before Lean my life was making very little progress at an impressively slow speed. Lean has since become an extremely personal journey for me. Yes, our business and processes have become something better than I ever imagined, but to me that's just the work side of it. I have personally become insatiable. I strive to become a better person every day in any way possible. Sometimes my drive is a little much and I get frustrated with the "slow speed" things are progressing, but whenever I take a minute to reflect—I can see what the Lean mentality has done for my life.

Since the initial influence of *2 Second Lean* I have accomplished the following in my personal life:

- Made countless Lean improvements in my home
- Picked up the habit of reading
- Become interested in history
- Become interested in how to lead people
- Made amazing changes in my family relationships
- Developed the habit of a rather lengthy “Miracle Morning” routine
- Finally, dreamed bigger dreams than I had ever previously imagined in my life

My life is changing for the better just a little each day and seeing that change makes me happy. Lean is a deeply personal and spiritual journey for me. I am so extremely grateful for Paul and the changes I’ve made in my life due to his influence. I look forward to bigger, better, and more widely impactful changes in the future. I truly look forward to changing the world for the better in any way I can.

*“Human felicity is produced not so much by great pieces of good fortune that seldom happen, as by little advantages that occur every day.” - Benjamin Franklin*

## DANNY BIRKES

I feel I have always tried to work by the adage of “work smarter not harder.” However, the Lean mentality has really helped me to take that thought to another level. Especially with the approach of “Fix what bugs you.” I have found that the more I practice Lean the more waste I see, and find more things that bug me. This in turn gives me several opportunities to improve something in my everyday life. From simple things like how I get ready in the morning to how I tackle large projects around the house.

Lean is inspiring in the way that you find great self-accomplishment, even from the smallest improvements. Also, in the way of sharing it with others and seeing their lives improve, too. Through Lean learning and continuous improvement, my eyes have been opened to see what is possible. It has given me much bigger goals and a grander vision for the future.



**ALEX RAMIREZ**  
**VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS**  
**VALLOUREC TUBE ALLOY LLC • OIL AND GAS**

---

I come from a very creative family. My father is an architect/artist and my mother is an educator with a passion for the arts. I grew up seeing my father doing aquarelles and building the most awesome architectural masterpieces from tailored homes, hotels, theaters, hospitals, and office buildings. My mother created an international bilingual kindergarten school in Mexico so my sister and I could have the opportunity to learn in a Spanish and English environment. Growing up, my mixture of cultures showed me that all cultures have much to offer. My father being Mexican, my mother from the US (Minnesota), and my grandparents from Germany, made me have a totally different perspective of the world. In my house, it was normal to have tacos for breakfast, burgers for lunch, and sauerkraut for dinner all in one day.

While at university, I participated in many different design contests as a Mechanical Engineer in the US (ASME Region X Chapters). To my surprise every year I won several first and second place prizes. For a kid in Mexico to win in events held in Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico, it was fantastic. The culture I had grown up in allowed me to open many doors to make friends outside my country.

While I did my university studies, I got invited to work as a process engineer in a company that made animal nutritional supplements. After working for this company and making many improvements the owner asked me (a 21-year-old non-experienced student) if I could build him a new factory with a totally new process.

It only took me 3 seconds to respond with a big, “YES!” I had no idea how to do it, but this opportunity was awesome. I finalized the project and built a 90-foot-high building with vertical processes. It worked very well and boy did I learn a lot. This project boosted my confidence to achieve whatever I set my mind to do in life.

With the money that I earned, I started a new business called MET. It is a camping textile goods company. We started with only 5 people and made backpacks, sleeping bags, and hiking gear. The outdoors was my passion and I thought I could pull off starting this business. To my surprise, I had no idea how to run a business or how to develop products that would sell, or solve “what bugged people.” I noticed that the Chinese were selling similar products at the price I was paying for the material to make our products.

While all this was happening, I fell in love with my beautiful wife and I knew I needed to find a way to have enough income to take care of her. I was not going to go very far to build a family if I stuck with my backpack business. One morning I decided to close the shop and drive to Houston and visit a friend I had made in the ASME chapter as a student. He was an opponent during my years of competitions and he was now an engineer working at NASA. I had kept in contact with him through the years, and eventually, he became my compadre (godfather of one of my 3 kids). Back then he had invited me to his home to look at different opportunities in the area. He insisted that I do a postgraduate degree, but I wanted to get married and not get a doctorate. His kindness to help people was beyond belief and he welcomed me into his home with his family.

I eventually ended up getting a job at Vallourec, where I still work to this day, and was able to get married to my sweetheart. I had many different positions as process engineer: engineering, production, a supervisor in production, and so on. One day an executive walked through my production line and loved the 5S implementation I had achieved. I loved the 5S concept and was really good at it. The problem was my team was so good at transforming our line that others just looked abandoned. An executive from our corporate office in France walked in my shop and was impressed. He eventually asked to speak with me. He opened the door for me to choose wherever I wanted to go in

the group to have an experience beyond Houston. He told me he wanted to develop my skills. It was a fantastic opportunity and one more time I took 3 seconds to say, “YES, thanks to you!” Being that I work for a French company I chose France!

Over the years I was sent back to Houston and invited back to France to lead a team of experts to create a process that would establish best practices and develop technologies to improve and develop new processes for new products that would go worldwide. This was a fabulous experience and I was exposed to many great people, leaders, and managers. I was able to work in 28 different locations around the world. I was able to travel to over 50 countries, benchmarking and developing partnerships with suppliers. I learned a lot as a technical expert in threading premium connections for the oil and gas industry. The Lean part was something for smarter people that could handle all those tools. Even though I went to a Japan mission and have seen Toyota, and many other companies, the guide company never explained the concept of Lean and we came back with a feeling, “this can only be done in Japan, its complex, our culture will never follow this.” Looking back, we really never understood Lean like the way it was explained by Paul’s videos or in *2 Second Lean*.

After 7 years of doing this, I was sent back to Houston to take over operations of a company that makes repairs and accessories for the group. This was my chance to implement everything I learned and make an even greater company. I started implementing Continuous Improvement Teams (CIT). Building teams together every week to solve a particular topic, but it required paperwork, indicators, and even simple, was complex for the shop floor. I continued with this for 2 years throughout the 5 locations until one day I had an honest conversation with one of my plant managers. I deeply appreciated his honesty. I asked him why the CITs were not working well and his response knocked me off my feet. He told me, “Alex if you want to know the truth we only put on a show when you come because we know it’s important for you and we don’t want to put you down.” I was totally shocked! I had failed to show them any better! The more I talked with my plant manager he made me realize that it was too complex. We just want

to make improvements not get together to talk about them. I was at a loss. What I thought was a solution wasn't having any effect in the shops, and what made it worse, I did not have a plan B. I appreciate my plant manager for opening my eyes. I remember we both had an agreement that we needed to find a way to create this continuous improvement mindset.

During this time, I had just hired an engineer from Brazil that came from one of our plants. He was very open-minded, full of energy, and had many ideas. His role in the company was Vallourec Performance Analyst (VPA). His position was to help implement Lean initiatives in the organization (Value Stream Mapping, Lean Road maps, 5S, Six Sigma, TPS, etc.). I was not convinced we were ready for it, but I wanted to give it a try as this engineer was an awesome guy. He was always trying to learn new things while keeping our corporate standards, and he found some FastCap videos and immediately brought them to my attention. I still remember him telling me, "Alex, I knew that the day I showed you this it would get you hooked." I was really amazed by the dynamic and empowering culture at FastCap. I had never seen it before. I continue to watch more and more videos from Paul Akers. I got more and more interested and listened to his audiobook *2 Second Lean*. At one point I watched a video where Paul invited people to spend a week working with him and his team. He called it the "FastCap Experience." As soon as I got to the office, I told my engineer to come with me. We started doing a video for Paul Akers. Without any practice or preparation, we recorded a 1-minute video speaking from our hearts and expressing our curiosity to learn. To my surprise, Paul answered us in 15 minutes with a message that inspired—it was fantastic! He made us feel special and that we had the right attitude to learn Lean. To this day I know that this was not normal and that this was an authentic experience.

Paul welcomed us to come to FastCap but to check-in with him in 2021 because of the COVID-19 situation. We have continued to ask Paul for help and he has continued to answer our questions. In minutes he has advised us with wisdom and guidance. He recommended we start with a small team that was willing to try it out and create a learning club to read *2 Second*

*Lean* and exchanging points of view. Since then we have created the learning club and we meet every week. We treat it like a party and we have a total of 10 people who participate in the club.

Something magical started to happen in the learning club. The team started doing *Lean* in the bathroom—and that’s when everyone got excited to do *Lean*! We understood why Paul said to start in the bathroom. It is a common place to share all key aspects of learning and to be humble about achieving the same goal. This was about respecting each other and leaving things better than we found them. Every week we assigned two people to clean the bathroom. Once we created the schedule, we had a machine operator (a 20-year veteran of the company) try out our bathroom process. We had so much fun that at the end of the week he told me something I will never forget, “Alex, this is the best experience of my 20+ years in the company.” I was speechless and wanted to cry with excitement. I asked myself, “How could I have missed this before?” I am an expert and very experienced, but I never thought of this before. This touched my heart completely.

We used WhatsApp with 15 different groups that we exchanged safety, quality, set-ups, projects, events, and so on, but only the managers had access. After our first session of the learning club, the team told me, “Alex you need to go *Lean* with WhatsApp, and eliminate the 15 groups and only keep one single group.” I made that adjustment.

A few days into the *Lean* restroom activity another amazing member proposed we do a “before and after” challenge and post results on WhatsApp. To our surprise, this was exactly what Paul encouraged us to do. We started the challenge and every day we would have a dozen examples. Soon we had gone from 20 people to 80 people in the WhatsApp group and we called it Continuous Improvement.

We kept reading the book and soon understood we needed to boost our morning meeting. We put in place something we call Group of Team Members(GTM) which was to empower the people to discuss issues amongst themselves. Soon I knew this had to be transformed into a FastCap style meeting where we invested in teaching people. We should show the “before and after” improvements and recognize and encourage the team. I

took the initiative to wake up every day at 4:00 a.m. Every day I prepared slides, videos, “before and after” pictures, and so on. I would repeat the same thing for the 2nd shift and after 2 weeks, I had established a sequence that was adapted to our needs and met the corporate frame.

My wife didn’t understand why I went to work early if I already was going to have a 10 to 12-hour day. The joy to see the people transforming through this new practice was amazing. Soon I got other managers asking if they could come in early and rotate weeks to prep for the meeting and so we did.

We are still at the beginning of our Lean journey and we still have much to learn, but we are excited and happy to build our network of companies that come visit us and then we visit them. I have never met Paul or the FastCap team in person. I have never done a Japan Study Mission trip. But I can tell you we have already set our eyes to one day be the host of the 2 Second Lean Summit. We want to go all the way. Our spirit is not short from achieving excellence because even if we are young on the Lean journey, we totally get it! We have discovered that this new approach actually works and we have turned on the key to an exciting and fun journey!

In the oil and gas industry, we have been hit with many crises in the market. In 2016, we had a major downturn and in 2020, we have experienced the biggest crisis ever in the history of the Oil Country Tubular Goods Market (OCTG). Having 2 *Second Lean* gives us not only all the satisfactions I described above but a real hope that we can turn this around and improve to be so efficient, we are no longer worried about what the market brings.

Looking at so many of our factories as outside companies related to OCTG, I had never seen Lean implemented as 2 *Second Lean*. After this short but magnificent experience so far I can say for certain that we have learned the following tools and principle:

- 1. Have a humble mindset—the expert mentality is not going to take you very far.**
- 2. We know how to start Lean...yes in the restroom of course.**

- 3. We have given an authentic purpose to our start shift meetings and our teams can feel it.**
- 4. Build a Lean culture and then do the Lean activities, rather than doing Lean activities and expecting a Lean culture.**
- 5. We created this complex vision of what Lean had to be, and we finally understand that Lean is simple and it's really, really fun.**
- 6. We understood the key to Lean is to develop the eyes to see waste and then find ways to eliminate it...but now it's driving me nuts (in a good way!).**
- 7. I personally understood that the most important thing is investing in people. That means giving your time to coaching and encouraging.**
- 8. We understand consultants and outside training are not going to transform our people and at the same time, we learn with the team ourselves.**

Please consider us as your Lean friends, we welcome anyone that wishes to visit us, hoping we can be part and accepted in the Lean community!

**P.S. Even if I have not met Paul in person, I thank him as he has transformed the way I conduct myself in my personal and professional life! You have something special and none of us will ever get to describe it. I'm just glad you have an open heart to help people. We need more people like you in this world.**



# BRITISH COLUMBIA



## ALEX TESENKOV

**THE LEAN PATH EXPERT • OWNER/DIRECTOR • SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT**

---

I remember when I was 14-years-old, I took my first Lean step. At that time, I knew nothing about Lean manufacturing or the Toyota Production System or how to eliminate waste or even what waste was. When I was in school, one of the tasks that we needed to complete was to help cafeteria workers lay out dishes and food on the table and clean it up after lunch was over. I had to pick up as many dirty plates as I could hold and bring them to the dishwasher. Some of us would sometimes drop a plate on the floor, then we needed to take a broom and clean up the broken pieces. This would take a lot of time and we didn't want to be in trouble for breaking plates or cups.

This was when I made my first optimization towards efficiency and saving time. I did not know what my motives were at the time; I guess that I was too lazy, but I changed the process that I had been previously using. I took a huge wheeled tray. It helped me because I would stack all the dishes onto it, and nothing would get broken. Plus, I did not need to keep going back and forth to collect the dishes and cups. Without realizing it, intuitively I optimized the process. It may sound silly, but I was born and raised in the Soviet Union where the only thing a 14-year-old boy knew about Japan was that Japanese electronics were the best.

Several years later, when I was a university student, I heard about the Toyota Production System for the first time. I had been learning about electronics and engineering and dreaming about working for some well-known manufacturers. I had found a series of articles in the newspaper about Toyota. These articles were fascinating. I read them many times and concluded that when I

have my own business, this is how I would want it to operate. These articles were not specifically about Lean manufacturing, and now I'm not even certain if the correspondent understood everything about the Toyota Production System, still, his writing made a significant impact on me.

During my university years, I continued to hear about Japanese manufacturing, quality, and efficiency from some of my professors. After university, my working life was devoted to software development. I worked for many large and small companies. For some of them, software product development was the main business and for some, it was not, but everywhere the development process was not as efficient as it could have been. Most of its time it consisted of firefighting.

In the early 2000s, I was introduced to the concept of Agile Product Development. I attended many trainings and acquired a lot of certificates trying to achieve excellence in this field. In one of the trainings, a fantastic coach had spent some time talking about using Lean in software development. I didn't understand it fully at the time, but I was impressed. I understood that Lean and Agile Product Development has to be used together. They are parallel to one another and have multiple commonalities like working for the customer, delivering value to the customer, reducing the manufacturing time to deliver value faster, etc. But what is even more fascinating, Agile Product Development can be used in hardware manufacturing just like Lean Product Development can be used in software development.

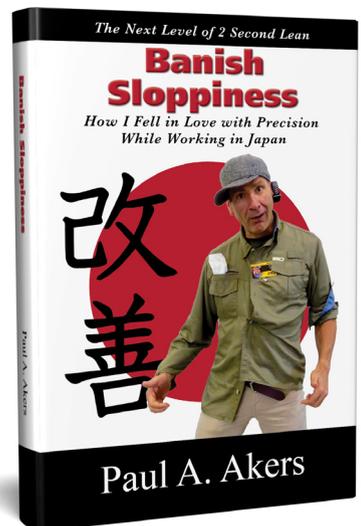
I continued my research on Lean Product Manufacturing. I read a lot of books and attended several trainings. These were great, but I felt that something was missing in the foundation of what I was learning. I was eager to learn more and to discover what it was that I was missing. I then found Paul's Lean videos on his YouTube channel. The videos were short, simple, but very educational. These videos started to put the Lean puzzle together for me, but it was still not enough. So, I read Paul's book. *2 Second Lean* is a fascinating story written by a brave guy who is never afraid of a challenge. This included confronting his successful, profitable production flow, disrupting it, and rebuilding it from the

ashes with a new idea in mind.

*2 Second Lean* puts forth a foundation for a new vision, a new path, which defines and develops a new mindset. As Paul describes, the problem was not the obstacles that were in his way, the problem was with the way itself. He then changed his path to a completely opposite one. When he had a problem with his inventory, he didn't hire an inventory manager or buy a multimillion-dollar inventory management program. He threw away the inventory, as we would throw out a rotten potato. When FastCap continuously faced order delays, which led to overtime and working on the weekends, Paul, instead of hiring more people, stopped the order shipment for several days and started to improve it. He improved everything from the production processes to the order delivery, to the salt and pepper shakers on the kitchen table.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DURING AN ECONOMIC CRISIS TO SAVE YOUR BUSINESS?

Most companies would eliminate the cost by doing the easiest and most common-sense way which is to let people go. Instead of doing this, Paul asked people to reduce costs by eliminating waste, improving the production processes, and he would send people to Japan to learn how to do it. Everything he did was counter-intuitive but very intelligent. In *2 Second Lean*, he shows the Lean mindset and how to think the Lean way. You will not find some kind of Lean tricks and techniques here. You will find something much more than that. You will find your Lean path the same way that I had found mine. As a logical extension of the *2 Second Lean*, Paul wrote another book *Banish Sloppiness*. It goes even further into the Japanese culture of a successful production. It shows the Lean mindset everywhere.



The *2 Second Lean* book is excellent, but I needed to go to the source and understand everything from inside. Fortunately, at that time, Paul was organizing his 12th incredible 2 Second Lean Japan Experience Tour. The tour was around my birthday, and I thought this would be a great birthday present. It went above and beyond my expectations. It was at the end of May, and I was on a plane flying to the birthplace of Lean. At our first meeting over dinner, Paul reminded us that the tour will be three long 12 hour days and these days would be very productive. Personally, for me, these days were the fastest days of my life. I desired to learn more, and the only thing that I could do was to open my eyes wider and make my ears bigger. The tour was exceptional, starting from a simple but very informative step-by-step video on how to get from the airport to the hotel without knowing a single Japanese word. I felt Lean everywhere: at the hotel’s breakfast room, tour bus, rest stops, and of course, the working factories and Dojo Educational Center. It was there that I understood the foundation of Lean. It is not about tools or techniques—it is all about their mindset.

## **HOW MUCH TIME DOES A COMPANY NEED TO BECOME A LEAN COMPANY?**

**One Day.**

The day it makes its first two-second improvement is the day that it takes its first step on the Lean path.

## **HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR COMPANIES TO STOP DOING LEAN?**

**One Day.**

The day a company does not make any improvements, it steps away from its Lean path. Lean is all about the journey, not a destination. It is a path Japanese workers walk day to day, month to month, year to year.

I had heard this several times: “Japanese people work hard.” This is true. But what is more important is that they work smart and that the Lean mindset is their way to do it. I stopped asking questions like “How do they do it?” or “What do they do to achieve it?” Instead, I began to ask, “Why do they do it?”

Questions concerning what or how can definitely help fix a problem or eliminate an obstacle, but these are short-term questions. The question why helps me to think and find my own way of how to fix things. I ask myself why they pay attention to an almost invisible imperfection when I used, “The best is the enemy of the good.” Or why they stopped an assembly line and started looking into the root cause of a problem when I had developed a sloppy patch to achieves a quick result.

Where does Lean production start? It starts with organizing salt and pepper shakers at the kitchen table. Before you go to expensive seminars and trainings to increase your productivity or develop a multi-month Lean transformation project, start with something simple, cost-free, and counter-intuitive. Organizing the salt and pepper on your kitchen table and show your team how to do the same thing.

## WHAT ABOUT OUTSIDE THE PRODUCTION ENVIRONMENT?

The beauty of Lean is it can be used everywhere. Lean is more than just a production system. It is not gone when we leave a production facility or an office. It just takes on other forms. Paul’s book, *Lean Health*, is an excellent example of using the Lean mindset to develop better health. This book is not about a new fancy diet. It is about using Lean manufacturing and applying it to your health when you treat your body as your number one customer. It is not about losing weight, but how to sustain a healthy body in your life.

We are not celebrating the *10th Anniversary of 2 Second Lean*. We are celebrating that tremendous influence in the last ten years that Paul’s *2 Second Lean* has rendered thousands of companies worldwide and millions of people who work for those companies. We are celebrating all their phenomenal achievements improving their work and life by eliminating wastes. We are celebrating all those high-quality products, making hundreds of millions of customers happier by resolving their problems. We are celebrating all those things that bug us because we are happy to face and fix them.



# KAZAKHSTAN

## ALIKHAN SAPARGALIYEV

**MECHANICAL ENGINEER, TRANSLATOR, LEAN CONSULTANT,  
& PRODUCT MANAGER • MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION & IT**

---

### PART 1 - LEAN IS HARD!

It seems like everyone in the 2 *Second Lean* community thinks that Lean is fun and simple. I want to politely disagree. For me, the road to Lean was pretty convoluted and I had my fair share of struggles along the way. But before you jump on me for saying such bogus things, let me tell you my story,

I met Paul during the time when he consulted for the BI Group—the largest construction company in Kazakhstan. I was immediately attracted by the simplicity, common sense, and passion with which Paul presents his ideas. And though I worked in the businesses development department, I asked my manager if I could volunteer and accompany Paul as a translator while he toured different projects and sites of BI Group.

Needless to say, it was an amazing experience for me to work with Paul and observe firsthand his approach to work and life. One of the first things you notice is how much respect Paul has for people. It's incredibly rewarding to work with Paul and just be around him. For example, we were visiting one of BI Group's road construction projects and we were dining at the camp canteen. After we were done, everyone just stood up and was ready to go, but Paul stopped us and asked to speak to the servers and the cook to thank them for the meal. It wasn't just a fleeting "thank you" that people often do without even thinking. Paul made sure to find out their names, have a short conversation with them, and was very specific in his thanks. Their faces absolutely lit up and you

could tell how happy they were and how much it meant to them that someone of Paul's caliber noticed their input.

Then of course there is Paul's incessant drive for improvements. No need to talk much about that as it is well documented in Paul's books and in his countless YouTube videos. But when you are near Paul, like I was fortunate to be, it is even more amazing to see how much Paul loves to improve everything and how much time he devotes to making improvements. The beauty of Paul's approach is that it's not limited just to production, it can be applied in any field, and even at home. So, when you are with Paul, nobody is off the hook. Everyone can contribute to the conversation about Lean and everyone is expected to practice Lean—whether you are a worker, an engineer, or a translator.

That brings us to my personal Lean journey. Since my first meeting with Paul I spent nearly two years learning about *2 Second Lean*. I read the book, watched Paul's videos, translated his speeches, did video voiceovers, and we had plenty of amazing conversations on top of that. Yet I wasn't really practicing Lean myself. I knew everything there was to know about Lean and I had the best example you can have in front of me, but still, it wasn't enough to turn me into an expert. Sure, I made some improvements here and there, shot some videos, but it never gained enough momentum for me to say that I was really doing Lean.

Why was that? I think it was because I spent too much time trying to make other people do Lean. Since everybody at BI Group saw how interested I was in Lean, and how tightly I was working with Paul, I soon was appointed as the Lean leader for one of the company divisions. I did a bunch of things: I organized a successful Lean conference, I created a database where all of the information of the improvement would be stored, I made an internal Lean website to showcase all of the progress and statistics, and a lot of other things that supported the implementation of Lean. Everything was going well, people submitted a lot of improvements, and management was happy with my work. However, I wasn't feeling the impact of Lean on myself. I couldn't feel the fun of Lean and I didn't feel empowered or energized. To my credit, I was never discouraged and it never crossed my mind that Lean might not be

for me. I was sure that I would figure it out and I was dedicated to doing it whatever it would take.

During one of Paul's visits to Kazakhstan, he asked me to accompany him to meet with a guy who owned a popular restaurant chain in Astana. The meeting went very well and a few weeks later I received a call from the guy asking if I could help him implement Lean at his company. It was an interesting offer because, although it was a much smaller firm compared to BI Group, the amount of potential impact that I could have was much higher and I felt like I could really make a difference. After some thought, I made the decision to switch.

I knew this time my strategy had to be a little different. It was clear that, first and foremost, I had to be the example of Lean for everyone around me. The fact the company was so much smaller (about 200 people in total, and only 20 in the main office) made it even more apparent that if I wasn't doing Lean, no one would believe me. With my back firmly against the wall, I decided to start making improvements.

What better place to start making improvements than at home? I sorted out some stuff in the kitchen, put some baskets in the fridge for easier storage, set up a charging station for all gadgets at home, and made a few other improvements. It was very simple. Some of the things didn't even work properly and I had to change them later, but it was a good first step and for the first time I could feel personal benefits from Lean and some positive energy as a result. Of course, I didn't forget to make "*before and after*" videos to document my progress. As my momentum grew, I shifted my focus to my car. In addition to simple 3Sing, I neatly organized my cables so that charging my phone and listening to music became straightforward. I also velcroed my garage door remote near the steering wheel, which helped me stop looking for it every time I entered or exited my garage.

By this time, I was starting to feel pretty good about myself, and I was happy that I could finally, consider myself a Lean doer, not just a Lean thinker or a Lean talker. The best part of all was it didn't feel like a burden. It was really helpful for what I was trying to do at work. I was showing the videos of my improvements in

every presentation I gave, and people loved it. The work aspect almost didn't matter. I was enjoying the process and at times I felt like I didn't even have to ask my brain to find what to improve. It was doing all the work for me in the background. Also, the fact that all my progress was recorded on video made it very easy to share it with others—not only coworkers but friends and family as well. Not only was I feeling better because my life was improving bit by bit, but I got encouragement from people around me. Everyone gets excited, they talk about it, ask questions, and momentum gets faster and faster.

Here are a couple of quotes that helped me the most on my Lean journey. The first one is from Taiichi Ohno, “The best improvement is the easiest improvement and the one you can do right now.” The second is a famous one from Paul Akers, “Fix What Bugs You!”

## **PART 2 - THE IMPACT OF LEAN**

When I was first figuring out how to be a proper Lean thinker; in early 2018, I was still having some resistance along the way. One day I got a crazy idea; I asked Paul if I could have some kind of intership at FastCap. To my absolute delight, he offered me not only an opportunity to come to work at FastCap but also to live at his home in Bellingham, while I was there. These were without a doubt one of the best three weeks of my life. Everything was amazing for me. Paul's house is incredibly beautiful, and located in the most gorgeous place, on a hill, with trees all around, and overlooking a bay. Paul and his wife, Leanne, welcomed me with such warmth and hospitality that I didn't have to worry about anything while I was there. The best was yet to come as I was preparing to start my first day at FastCap. It was such an exciting moment for me because I heard so much about it from *2 Second Lean*, from YouTube, and from Paul himself. I am guessing for BI Group employees, FastCap was kind of a magical place that everybody heard about, but nobody actually saw. Some (very few, I think) even thought that it might not exist at all and Paul made it up just to sound more persuasive. All the ridiculousness aside, here I was, ready to immerse myself in the FastCap experience.

Boy, was I not disappointed. Everything I heard about was true, and then some. You all have probably seen the virtual FastCap tours that Paul has on YouTube. You know how clean it is, how organized everything is, how there are no walls, and the bathrooms are in pristine condition. I won't talk about it here too much. What struck me the most was the atmosphere of friendliness, openness, and engagement that I felt from the beginning, and saw more and more examples as I continued my work. I loved how people openly discussed the problems at the morning meeting, I loved how transparent the financial metrics of the company were. I loved how actively engaged everyone was in discussing the issues at hand. I had an interesting conversation with one of the employees, Greg, who was relatively new to the company. I asked him what he thought of FastCap. He said that for the first month he didn't say anything because, from his previous work experience, he was used to the fact that it didn't matter what he thought. At FastCap it's different. Everyone listens. They don't always agree, but people listen to each other. I couldn't agree more with Greg.

I also want to point out how easy it was for me to start making improvements. I caught myself thinking I am not afraid, I am not going to meet resistance or disapproval if I propose a new way of doing something, like it often happens in "normal" organizations around the world. I knew full-heartedly that whatever I proposed, unless it's really wrong or expensive (which rarely is the case), I received full support from my colleagues. On my very first day, I got to work at one of the stations and finished the first batch of parts, I thought that I could rearrange the workstation a little bit to make myself more comfortable. Lukas, who was guiding me that day, saw my attempts, quickly came to ask if I needed help, and was genuinely happy to see me try to improve something. He proposed we assemble an extra bench, and we just



went together to the shop and built the setup. This little gesture of support from Lukas really showed me that this place cares about people's ideas and it's safe to experiment. What I think is very important is the FastCap team appreciates even the smallest improvements. I remember that on one of the days I improved the process of loading pencils on a workstations, I thought it was cool and I liked the end result, but it was far from being ground breaking and I thought that nobody would care. But when Paul found out about my improvement, he was so excited that he decided to make a video about it—making me stand in front of the camera and explain what I did. We shot it several times because, according to Paul, I lacked passion in my delivery (oh well!). After about 15 minutes the video was already posted on Paul's YouTube channel. How can you not fall in love with the culture that promotes such an attitude to even the smallest of ideas? If Paul's and Lukas' reaction had been a little different, I might have had a much harder time improving things. Everyone was so supportive and enthusiastic that my time at FastCap was one of the most creative and fun times of my life.

I consider myself to be very lucky to have had a chance to experience the FastCap culture. It really solidified my understanding of Lean both on a personal level and on an organizational level. On a personal level, Lean gave me extra confidence in how I approach my everyday life. With every new improvement that I make, I feel like there is nothing that I cannot fix or make better. I recently spent about a month at my parent's house and decided to use the time to try to fix as many things as I thought needed my attention. I started with small improvements here and there but soon found myself fixing things that were bugging my mother for years since nobody found time to tackle them. By the time I was about to leave, I improved so many things that I felt that even my identity changed quite a bit. I went from being a regular person who often struggles with obstacles to someone who fixes things no matter how tricky they may be. With such an identity shift comes great confidence, that allows me to take on more and more responsibility.

That brings us to Lean on an organizational level. My first "culture" shock was when I got the chance to work with Paul

and see his values, his attitude, and just his leadership in general. The second one happened at FastCap, where I absolutely fell in love with the culture and harmony. It became a sort of like a gold standard for me of how a company should run. Once you see it and fully experience it, there is no going back. I no longer have an interest in working for organizations that don't respect their people and don't value people's ideas and creativity. Furthermore, I feel like my mission now is to help make Lean organizations more and more common. My mother owns a private school in Kazakhstan and last year we decided to expand and open a second school. Right from the get-go, we decided that the new school would be based on Lean values and will primarily be focused on teaching kids to be the Lean thinkers of the future. The idea is that everything about the school would be Lean—flexible spaces and furniture, flexible curriculum, and lots of freedom for students and teachers as facilitators of learning and not simply sources of information. Essential parts of the educational process would be daily 2-Second improvements, “before and after” videos, and, of course, the morning meetings. I think it would be amazing for kids and teachers to be immersed in the Lean culture, as it would not only promote extraordinary creativity and achievements, it would be much more rewarding and humane. I also think that being a part of a Lean organization and seeing it in action would help them create more Lean organizations in the future. That, in my mind, would be the main benefit of a Lean school.

I want to finish my story with a short conversation about gratitude. Gratitude might not seem directly related to Lean on the surface, but on a deeper level, the two concepts are actually very closely tied together. In one of his videos Paul says that to be grateful for something, one has to realize that he or she doesn't deserve it. I couldn't agree more. I believe that the universe is providing us with all of this amazing stuff. Not because we somehow deserve it, but because of its infinitely generous nature. I feel like apart from being grateful, the best way for us to honor this generosity is to have a deep respect for what is given to us and to not be wasteful about it. In other words, we have to be Lean.

A satellite-style map of North America is shown. A red location pin is placed over the province of British Columbia. A blue speech bubble with white text is overlaid on the map, pointing to the pin. To the right of the map is a portrait of a man with short brown hair, smiling, wearing a camouflage jacket.

# BRITISH COLUMBIA

## ALLEN HEWITT

**OWNER • NORTH WESTERN PROPERTY MAINTENANCE  
SYNTHETIC GRASS SALES & INSTALLATION**

---

The drive to advance, the addiction to move forward, and the need for simplicity are the usual suspects in a business wanting to leap into the “Lean Adventure.” Our Lean journey is no different but does offer some interesting twists of grace and destiny. Here is my Lean story.

My company, North Western Property Maintenance, located in Canada, specializes in landscape construction and synthetic grass distribution. In the early fall of 2019, I received a call from a customer insisting that they needed synthetic grass and that I had to come to see the project as soon as possible. The customer informed me that it was on a beautiful property and that the job was substantial. This got my attention. However, to my disappointment, I realized the phone number was from the United States. Newly elected Mr. Trump had very strict rules on Canadians coming into the U.S. for work and I did not want to end up in an immigration jail cell. I had to decline the customer’s lofty offer. However, the gentleman on the other line would not accept no and insisted I come. “Just come see the project. It will blow your mind.” Recalling my positive experiences of “just say yes and figure it out later,” I said, “I will be there next Tuesday.”

Next week arrived and I entered the “compound.” To my surprise, the customer had been completely truthful. The project was big and the property was stunning! I had a hunch that the inside of the house would be extraordinary as well, so I asked for a tour. The homeowner showed me all of the guitars he built and the

custom furniture he made. I was impressed, especially with how clean everything was! I headed back home to reflect on everything I had seen.

I decided to Google the name of this customer, as I had a feeling he had done something considerable in his life to have accumulated such a property. “Paul Akers - Lean Culture Lean Books” came up. I thought, “What the hell is Lean? Is this guy a fitness freak?” I continued to explore some YouTube content on the “Lean” topic, then sent Paul a message asking more about his books. He sent me to his website and told me to read! They are all free.

Everything I read made complete sense. As a company that creates landscapes, we were organized in the sense that trucks would be clean and tools would be put away. But we had no clue what to call this process, no framework for it, and our company culture sucked. We would turn through employees every three months and we would accumulate tons of junk.

At this point, we were operating out of the back forty in a field with no power or water. I recall day one of our Lean journey was having employees read the definition of Lean and having a discussion on one of the 3S’s: *Sort*. We had so much junk, including leftover job site materials and excess synthetic grass inventory. It was overwhelming to see and the mission was to sort through it all. I bit into Lean hard! We stopped going to job sites and started up all of our machinery and made trip after trip to the dump.

*Shine* was next up. We had an outhouse for a bathroom and with Paul’s advice, we started there. The team added a mirror, synthetic grass flooring, and a fragrance mister to name a few of our 2-Second improvements. We soon had one of the finest outhouses in Canada. The idea of sorting through the junk and making small improvements was easily adopted by employees and slowly they saw the benefit. I had become obsessed with Lean and my employees started following suit.

Paul informed me that my next step was to go on the Japan Study Mission. Again, my approach was “say yes and figure it out later.” That is what I did. Japan was an eye-opener. I found the work culture to be gentle and caring, while also allowing and encouraging employees to show massive levels of ownership. This

employee ownership led to extreme levels of output and perfect quality. This was the complete opposite of what I had experienced in the North American work culture.

While in Japan, we visited a bridge deck construction site. Coming from landscape construction, I found similarities between the bridge deck and the projects we do. The Japanese construction workers' approach to their job was completely different from the North American approach. The construction workers wore clean, ironed, long sleeve collared shirts and had no mud on their boots. The construction site did not have coffee cups or cigarette butts littered from one end to the other. There were no swarms of employees resting chins on shovels wondering what to do next. Everyone was working. The honor of working and providing infrastructure to the country was reiterated when the workers provided our tour with towels embroidered with what the bridge would look like when it was done.

My *Satori* (sudden enlightenment) moment arrived and I was determined to replicate the Japanese sense of ownership and pride in work by starting from the ground up. I felt that because the Japanese employees took great care in their appearance, tools, and job site cleanliness, this would be the starting block that would translate to ownership with the byproduct being superior quality. That is what we did!

## **SINCE ADOPTING THE LEAN PHILOSOPHY WE HAVE:**

- 1.** Confidently purchased a two-million-dollar warehouse and commercial property. From a mud pit in a horse field 3 years prior -this is a huge change!
- 2.** We have seen employee retention goes up drastically. We used to turn through employees every three months. The majority of our labor employees are long term, having been with the company 1+ years, and never quit because of culture. We teach our employees the eight areas of waste so that they can find and attack it.
- 3.** We set up an incredibly organized shop providing a smooth transition for new employees and helping with the flow of work

between jobs. Our shop is standardized from the sizes of nails and screws we use to the size of synthetic grass samples we cut. When a new recruit comes through our warehouse, they are amazed as they have never seen a landscape company so organized.

4. As our quality and reputation has risen, we have been called upon to do work for some of Canada's most reputable landscape architects.

5. We have the ability to manage more work. We do not blame our people, instead we blame our lack of processes. We are continuously implementing new processes. It is from the top down how we quote a job to how we install a synthetic grass nail.

6. Quality. We recently received our 100th 5-Star Google review. Our closest competitor is at 50. Because we stress the importance of clean trucks and cleans tools, this thinking overflows to the job site. If trucks are clean, job sites will be clean. If job sites are clean, quality can increase. If 2-Second improvements are created to uncover the waste, our employees have more time to focus on quality.

**THERE HAVE BEEN MANY CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS ALONG OUR JOURNEY AND I HAVE DECIDED TO SHARE THEM IN THE HOPES THAT THEY HELP UPCOMING LEAN LEADERS AVOID MAKING THE SAME MISTAKES:**

1. Do not implement in the short term to increase the gross margin. Do it to increase the quality of work and to build your people into superstars. The gross margin increases will come. Implementing Lean is like buying a stock you plan on holding for years to come, knowing that the big profits will be made later.

2. For construction companies you will have to train your people to do Lean at morning meetings on job sites. To avoid the waste of having employees come all the way to the shop for a meeting and then drive to their job site for the day. We have trained them to implement a modified morning meeting on-site in smaller groups and then have

full group meetings on Monday and Friday morning at the shop.

**3.** There will be a big gap between Lean at “headquarters” when compared to Lean at the “job sites.” This is magnified if you run multiple job sites. This is very challenging as your “headquarters” will get all of the 2-Second improvements as the leaders are usually at the shop more than they are on job sites. To prevent this, leaders need to train employees to have modified morning meetings at job sites and hold these employees accountable for creating and implementing 2-Second improvements.

**4.** Lean does not happen overnight. It takes a lot of effort and time, but the results are beyond worth it. Some 2-Second improvements will show results right away, but some will take months until they are felt throughout the organization. It is the idea that at some point down the road the burden of the work is reduced on one of our employees. It might not be today and that is fine!

**5.** Not everyone will see the benefit of Lean. This is usually because the leaders in the organization have not trained their employees properly on the benefits of Lean or have failed to demonstrate Lean from the top down. Naturally, employees who do not want to participate quit. You can try your best to influence the team but expect some employees to resist the change and ultimately leave.

**6.** You must teach your employees how to see the waste through the 8 areas of waste (9 areas if you include communication). Then you must show your employees how to make improvements. Be patient and understand—not everyone will fully have the skillset to implement these improvements right away. By working shoulder to shoulder with employees making the improvements you will quickly train them to become better builders. I found if I was the only one making the improvements, I was the only one who was obtaining and improving skillsets. This was a big issue when other employees would make improvements as they would fail because I had not given them the opportunity to improve their craftsmanship.

I am forever grateful for the grace and destiny of the phone call that came from the customer in early Fall 2019. Our Lean journey started by chance and continues to evolve into greatness. It is a great example of how special moments will arrive in one's career and life if we just continue to "say yes and figure it out later!"

## BELOW ARE SOME 2-SECOND IMPROVEMENTS IMPLEMENTED BY OUR STAFF AND ARE UNIQUE TO OUR INDUSTRY:

### 1. STANDARDIZED SCREWS & NAILS



Prior to implementing Lean, we had multiple screw sizes and nail sizes. This was a disaster as we needed different drill bits, hammer sizes, and had multiple mini storage boxes everywhere! We standardized our screw sizes and types. Now every impact gun has only one type of driver bit! We made the nail carrying cases the same size as the nail box so we can simply insert a new box of nails into the case which has rope handles attached to make lifting and transporting much easier.

### 2. TWO SECOND IMPROVEMENT BOARD

To keep track of our improvements and to show that they are getting done, we use post-it notes. The post-it note color represents the month in which the 2-second improvement was created. We can then track the progress of the improvements and have a visual of how many improvements we complete month to month.



### 3. SYNTHETIC GRASS TOOL KIT

We used Kaizen Foam and modified a DeWalt toolbox to make specific kits for our synthetic grass



work. This has greatly reduced the number of tools lost on sites and provides assurance to the employees that they have the right tools on hand.

#### **4. TENT INSTALLED OVER MATERIAL PIT WITH KANBAN FILL LINE**

This is one of our best improvements and it's so simple. At our morning meeting, a junior employee asked, "When it rains, the materials are heavier. Can we put a tent over the pit to keep the materials drier and lighter?" This one improvement has drastically improved our ability to move material. Our trucks can take more material to job sites and our employees can move more materials in wheelbarrows because it weighs significantly less. There is also a kanban fill line that visually signals when to order more.





## AMIR ABOUZEID

### MECHANICAL ENGINEER • FOODBASKET

---

#### Introduction

It is my pleasure to attempt to contribute to *2 Second Lean the 10th Anniversary* edition. Just to understand the reach that Paul has, I am a Mechanical Engineer working in my family business, in Egypt. So how does a guy like Paul reach a guy like me, halfway across the world? The internet has made that possible for sure. But how does a guy like Paul make an IMPACT halfway across the world, on a business he has no knowledge about? That is why Paul is impressive! Let me start from the beginning and take you through my journey.

#### What the hell in Lean manufacturing?

It was the Summer of 2019, and I was enjoying a week off with friends. A friend of mine, Karim Elsabee, was telling me how he has significantly increased his waste recycling facility output, after hiring a process engineer with a Lean manufacturing background. “What the hell is Lean?” I asked (just like Paul did the first time he heard about it). My friend briefly explained and told me that he is able to process double what he used to before. I was impressed! “I need to get me one of those Lean guys!” As if it were that easy! Halfway through the holiday I had to drive back for an important board meeting. I looked up Lean manufacturing videos and after some scrolling, I found the *2 Second Lean* audiobook and started playing it. Three hours up and another three hours down and I had finished it. I was hooked!

#### Brute-Force Approach

“I want Lean, and I want it now!” That pretty much sums what I was trying to do at the beginning. I started looking for and

talking to various Lean consultants in Egypt. I sent three people from the production, quality, and administration on a 2 month Lean Green Belt course. I announced a vacancy for a process engineer with a strong Lean manufacturing background. I basically had no idea what I was doing!

### **Saved by an Angel**

Among the various consultants I spoke to, I was lucky to have spoken with Sherine Mosallam. An alma mater, Sherine was a much more experienced engineer, that took part in the first applications of Lean manufacturing in Egypt, at the local GM factory. I explained to Sherine all the constraints I had and she in return explained to me how Lean was a long journey. She tried to manage my expectations and explain to me how I was in no position at the time to benefit from her consultancy. I had no team, I had no budget, and I had no time! Still, Sherine helped by introducing me to one of her Lean Black Belt students who was looking for a company where he could make his project.

### **Slowly, Slowly, Slowly**

We spent the last quarter of 2019 being introduced to 5S, Kaizen, and the 8 wastes. We hung posters, signs and started to work on improving our processes. Our own trainees were finishing their Lean Green Belt courses and helping around. Slowly, our production started to increase. However, we were still unable to reach our target production rate even with all the experience and analysis of our consultant.

### **Back to Basic**

So, there I was watching Paul's videos, looking for a good deal of motivation and hope, and YouTube algorithms I decided to merge two of my favorite interests: Lean and Aviation. I discovered Paul was a fellow aviator in his Atlantic Crossing video (looking to do that one day in my co-owned PA-32). I was excited and commented on the video. In a few hours, Paul was writing back, letting me know he was planning to come to Egypt in March. I immediately asked Paul to reserve some time to visit us in the factory and for us to take him around Cairo. There I was exchanging WhatsApp voice notes with Paul Akers! I could not believe it. And then it dawned on me. In three months, Paul will

visit us. He is not going to be happy with what he sees! Next day in the factory I asked, “Guys, you remember Paul?” They answered, “Of course.” I had downloaded the translated Arabic version of *2 Second Lean*, printed 5 copies, and bound them and gave them to every employee we had, to read, in rotation. “He’s coming in March to visit us!” So, there I was getting firsthand advice from Paul himself and thinking how I can improve the situation significantly by the time Paul would be visiting. I immediately started re-reading *2 Second Lean* and doubling up on my daily dose of FastCap videos. On the 3rd of January 2020, I went for my first morning meeting, and wrote to Paul to let him know. We have been doing it daily since then. Since I am in the company 3-4 times a month, my colleagues are rotating the responsibility. We are no where as structured or efficient as FastCap’s meetings, but we see that this important step and it has created the only opportunity to give our associates’ a designated time where they can freely voice their ideas for the business.

### **One Year Lean**

We are now a bit more than one year since I first heard about Lean. Our current productivity has been doubled. We are no where as organized, efficient or proficient as FastCap but we are far away from where we were one year ago. We believe in Lean. We “hire for character and train for skill.” We try everyday to “fix what bugs us.” We are making some before and after pictures, but we are still miserably behind. But you know what? We are motivated. We are happy to have 2-Second improvements every day. Continuous improvement has become engrained in some of our best performers. They are our best performers because they understand, believe in, and practice Lean.

I joined the company as interim CEO on January 1,2019. My idea was to improve the operation using my technical background and then hand over a nice and stable operation to whoever we could identify as a suitable candidate. I discovered with Lean, there is no “nice and stable operation.” Operational excellence is a faraway light. It shows you the path that you have to follow. Lean is the set of tools we are using to navigate that path. The journey is the fun part, and that’s why we do not want it to end!

## **Grateful**

I am grateful to my friend who introduced me to Lean. I am grateful to Paul who took time to share his experience and knowledge and touch so many people across the continents. I am grateful to every person who has helped along the way. I am forever grateful to my team, the associates of Foodbasket, Egypt. They have endured and reversed the fate of that company, with their effort and faith.



## AREK

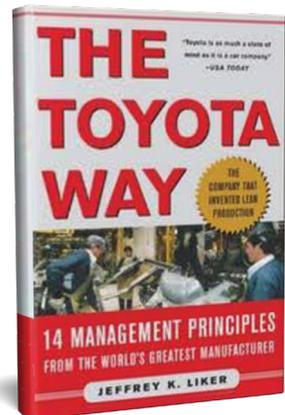
OWNER • AGENTTOOLS • TOOL DISTRIBUTORS

---



Years ago I was handed one of the greatest books, *The Toyota Way*, by Jeffrey Liker. I read the whole book and came to the point of thinking, “It is not for me.” Great book. Great company. However, much too complicated for a small company of 10 people, like mine. This was my first touch with Lean, without any success of course. The whole idea seemed to be what we needed to go ahead and develop the business, but I could not believe that I could use it. Toyota is an enormous company, with thousands of people manufacturing millions of cars a year and located far away in Japan! My company is little, doing quite a different kind of business (agency sales service) and we are located in Poland, a new economy that changed into a free market just a few years ago. It simply could not work. So I put the book aside and returned to the daily routine.

In 2017 I got in touch with *The Toyota Way* again. We had issues with organizing processes in our company. We could not solve simple problems and the morale of the team was not good. The business was still running very well, however, I knew that it would be just a matter of time before problems would start



to happen. I knew I needed to do something to get the company on a different level. I read the book once again concluding, “If they can run such a huge company, I can run a small one as well but I just need to learn how.” The decision was simple. I needed to go and see Toyota! I started searching different options for visiting Toyota and by chance, I got to Paul Akers’ website and later, of course, to his videos. After watching “Fastcap Tour” the first time I asked my wife to sit down and watch it with me. I said, “I want our company to look like this one, no matter how we do it, this is the goal.” Of course, I downloaded Paul’s book, read it in one night, and contacted Paul on WhatsApp (as it was recommended at the end of the book) asking for a trip to Toyota. You know Paul, the answer arrived after just minutes! Before the morning arrived, we even agreed on translating the *2 Second Lean* into Polish! All quickly, all via WhatsApp, no official mail or discussions, etc. This was really Lean!

I have read all of Paul’s books and many other books about Lean. We took part in a training called “Lean Expert” and visited some companies already implementing this idea in Poland. I was eager to learn as much about Lean as possible. Finally, in 2018, I went with Paul to Japan. I did it twice. In Spring alone, and later in Autumn with my company manager. This was a life-changing experience, learning how slow, unorganized, and sloppy I was. I asked myself, “What have I learned from these trips?”



This was my answer:

- **I start with myself!**
- **100% focus on quality (in all aspects).**
  - No compromise, no excuses, and no acceptance of mediocrity.
- **Everything I do can be done better...always!**
- **The right order is people, process, product.**
  - No great products without great people and perfect processes.

After visiting Toyota and other companies in Japan, I got stronger and fully committed to this way of life. Nobody could tell me that this cannot work in Poland and in my business. I have seen enough not to even listen to such “advice.” I started changing myself and my business. But, there was one more turning point on my way...a visit to Yellotools in Germany. This was the final proof that Lean can work for me. Thanks to Michael Althoff and his team!



What was the first step? As recommended, we started with morning meetings and 5S (reduced to 3S to make it simpler and easier to understand) for all team members. It was a challenge to change myself and later my team. I remember several hard days, however sooner than I expected the idea was accepted and we started to go in a new direction. I know it is a never-ending story and we have to work on it every single day. After 2 years, I saw so much change and improvement in our lives. It would not be possible without Paul and his books.

What I learned from Paul is that Lean is about sharing with other people. This is the basic principle. You can only develop and get better when you do so and when you stay humble and eager to learn. No excuses!

# BEFORE



# AFTER



**ASHLEY J BAILEY**  
**CEO & LEAN ENTHUSIAST • KLIME-EZEE LTD.**

---

## OUR LEAN JOURNEY

Before I tell my story, I just want to say how incredibly grateful I am to know Paul and to have the opportunity to learn from him and his team at FastCap. Paul has been a great mentor to me and become one of my closest friends.

Our journey began a while ago in my company Klime-Ezee Ltd. (UK), and before I go into detail, I need to say one thing...I would encourage anyone to document not just their celebrations but their trials, tribulations, and turbulent times throughout their journey, because not only do we learn from looking at our past, but we also forget the good times in the midst of the hardship!

It was the year 2012, the year of the summer Olympics in London, the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, and the year Facebook went public (with share prices at \$38 USD each). Back at base, Klime-Ezee was stuck in an endless loop of late deliveries, unhappy customers and frustrated employees. We had three very hungry competitors, who could have easily poached our top few customers and pulled the rug from underneath our feet in a matter of seconds. Business was very fragile, and my night-times were sleepless.

I believe it was midsummer in which the straw that broke the camel's back happened, and somehow, I had snapped for the final time! Our factory was a complete mess, my team hated coming to work and fled as soon as their shift finished, I started to feel immense pressure from wearing every hat and firefighting throughout the day. As I sat in the reception office, with my head

in my hands...I was seriously considering selling my business.

That night after many hours of research, looking for ways to push the business forward and reduce my stress levels, I discovered a YouTube video about 'Lean Thinking' concepts by Paul A. Akers. He was the owner and founder of FastCap, in Washington, USA. I was intrigued by Paul, his story and the way of thinking really resonated with me. I made contact with him via Skype and that was the phone call as they say that "changed my life."

For the first 12 months, I continued to stay in close contact with Paul to apply the 2 *Second Lean* methodology to Klime-Ezee. Showing improvement videos in our morning meetings and teaching my team FastCaps Lean principles.

The first year's results were ASTOUNDING to say the least! Reduced lead times, reduced inventory, increased production flow and increased profitability (in one year our net profits were up by 72%). Our workforce had a new lease on life. By the end of the third year we had acquired our closest competitor and doubled our sales...without increasing our lead time by a single day!

Amongst the other amazing things that have happened since then, the opportunity to travel (our workforce included) to see the most humble and astounding Lean companies all over the world. Attend numerous speaking engagements and the chance to open our doors to others for tours, has been truly something we could have never imagined. Forming the original 'Lean Rat Pack' with Paul, Nick, Michael, Greg and myself and later being part of creating the Global Lean Leadership Summit (GLLS) has been something I could never have imagined!

As our good friend Michael Altoff from YelloTools, in Windeck, Germany says, "Hard work can take you somewhere, but Lean work can take you anywhere."

I believe it was 2014 when things got more serious; we had been approached by a close friend to help introduce the Lean concepts within the Derbyshire Police Force. This became our first 'consulting' job, but you should NOTE that our entire service to the force has been free of charge as we are proud to give back to our force within the UK. This 'service' has snowballed from a couple of tours a year, to over 20 officers two or three times

a month, to off-site presentations and even a visit from our Fire Fighting Service. This also led to me being awarded a Police Commendation by the Chief of Derbyshire Police!

We have also been privileged to help other local companies start and progress their own journeys. This has been amazing for us as we have been able to not only watch them grow, but to be part of building a network of Lean thinkers right here in the UK.

Over the many years of doing Lean with my team, I should mention there's been many dips, plateaus and growth but the main recurring issue has always been the people. We had a huge disconnect somehow from translating what I wanted as the CEO to the shop floor, whatever I tried just never sank in. In 2016 we decided to create a 'Matrix' or 'Lean Pathway' as others have called it, to clearly communicate my requirements to my team which creates the employees we need at Klime-Ezee to grow and exceed our customers' expectations. It's allowed us to drive peoples focus towards personal development and learning which has in turn benefited the company and our customers in many different ways.

I was always told don't take Lean home but with the creation of KidsGoLean, our family has had the chance to develop a channel to help educate and teach kids about Lean and the benefits that it can bring by teaching problem solving at an early age.

In 2020 as part of Lime Green Lean Ltd., the consultancy company we created to manage our tours and the connection to the police, we finally launched our store FixWhatBugsYou; an online store for FastCap products provided to the UK market, it's in its infancy but it's growing daily. With Paul's kind permission we are actually publishing his books in all languages for distribution across Europe!

So that's a brief look at how Lean has impacted my life as well as those around me and our incredible journey so far. We didn't even touch on my trip to Japan with Paul or how Brad Cains and I nearly died flying his plane between two tornadoes! We were lucky enough to have the help of Paul when we started our journey and we hope that by providing our knowledge to others, we can pass on at least some of what we have learned from the man himself.

I would like to personally thank Michelle, Dale and Danny

for their help and support in the early stages of our Lean journey. When I came up with, yet again, another crazy idea and went off on a tangent. Also, Serena and Shaun for helping steady the ship and take the reins to skyrocket our journey to the next level. I truly couldn't have done any of this without any of my team. Their support has been invaluable!

Thank you to my supportive wife Sara and kids, Katie and William for being so understanding, I do travel a lot and spend a lot of hours on my laptop keeping all the plates spinning. It's all for them and our very LEAN future!

I'll leave you with a quote...

*“What makes you think your future self  
has any more time than your current self?”*

Stop making excuses and just change something that saves you 2 seconds, you'll never look back!



# NEW ZEALAND

**BERNARD POWELL**  
**FOUNDER & CONSULTANT**

**PREMIER GROUP NZ • MANUFACTURER & DISTRIBUTOR**

---

Ok, so I am the lucky last contributor to this amazing book! I managed to get in at the 11th hour! Thanks, Paul!

What an honor to be involved! We had just hosted an AME tour of our business (Check out our YouTube channel, we had so much fun). I had been having extra contact with Paul, and of course, the tour gave him some insights into our business. He said, “Hey, I love what you guys are doing. I might be able to get you into our new book!” I, of course, said, “Heck yes! Bring it on!” So here we are!

This book is very aptly called **IMPACT!** Boy oh boy, what an incredible *IMPACT 2 Second Lean* has had on my life, and seeing it flow onto my amazing team and wonderful family! You know it is a good book when it has the power to change millions of lives if not billions. I 100% believe this book, along with the original *2 Second Lean* book, has the power and the magic to do just that. If only we could get the book in front of enough people! Please do your bit and share, share, share the message!

A wish and desire I personally have are for every person on Planet Earth to discover the incredible life-changing magic of *2 Second Lean*! Then, of course, apply it to their own lives! This simple principle, if applied daily, would totally transform the world as we know it. It would end the mind-numbing piles of money being thrown at environmental projects and schemes. Lean is the ultimate green vehicle. It would end poverty, it would end

scarcity, it would end wars, waste, famine, and more!

Just humor me for a moment; Close your eyes and imagine a world where every man, woman, and child are committed to making just one small improvement. They would start in their sphere of influence every single day, for the rest of their lives. Imagine a world of 8 billion human beings all committed to fixing what bugs them, every time they experience struggle during their day. Imagine governments, local councils, military, police, hospitals, public transport departments, in fact, every area of public service, all focussed on eliminating waste through small daily improvements! Every person on the planet would be affected in a positive way from day one! Life would just get better every day! As Paul says, “A great life is an improving life!” Every human being has an inbuilt desire to improve their circumstances. Every human being feels a buzz when something in their life improves. People love to see and feel progress!

At Premier Group New Zealand (NZ), we call this the Lean Bug. The earlier in life, you catch it, the better! My biggest regret in life is that I didn’t discover Lean earlier! I often say to my team or family, “Just imagine if we had discovered this earlier; Imagine how much further ahead we would be!” But as any Lean thinker knows, regrets don’t add any value to your life. If they pop into your head, you must deal with them quickly before they have a chance to drag you down! An old Chinese proverb says: Don’t stumble over something behind you! Another great quote I often share with my team is this, “The best time to plant an Oak tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now!” No matter what age bracket you fall into now, my best advice is to start your own Lean journey right now! Not tomorrow, not next week!! RIGHT NOW! Do not delay! Do not procrastinate! Do not waste any more of your precious time! Life rewards action! Be an action-taker! As soon as you make one small improvement you will catch the bug and you won’t look back!

Remember, the coward and the hero have the same fears? The difference is that the hero does it anyway! Are you a hero or a coward? It is so important to have the courage to look in the mirror and take full ownership of the situation you find yourself

in right now and realize that only you have the power to change it for the better. A Lean thinker never wastes time making excuses or blaming others for their problems. They take full responsibility, and they make up their mind to win. They focus on things they can control and don't waste time or emotional energy on the rest! They are givers, not takers! They are not complainers nor moaners! They are fun people to be around! They are always positive, grateful, and thankful! They are unselfish! They want to help others to get ahead in life too! Don't waste your precious time making excuses. Make changes! You can't make both!

Remember that life is not a dress rehearsal. You don't get to practice for this! Life is right now! Every second that goes by, you are getting older, and your time is becoming more scarce; therefore, more valuable! It all may seem very obvious, but the tragic thing is that 99% of the people I meet don't seem to understand this simple truth! Or if they do, they certainly don't act like it! Do you take life as it comes? Or do you take a deliberate approach? You can't change the wind, but you can adjust the sails! Focus on what you can control! The biggest roadblock I see with everyone I coach, meet, mentor, or discuss Lean with is CONSISTENCY! As human beings, we are wired to be inconsistent. It is in our nature. So, you must take deliberate action to combat that every waking hour! We are a direct result or product of our daily habits. If we cannot win the daily consistency battle, it will be hard to improve anything in your life, let alone win!

### **Here is a couple of top tips for you:**

1. Write a 2-Second improvement as your A1 priority at the top of your daily task list. Write it on every page ahead of time; when you sleep at night, you are already mentally committed to that all-important goal. When you wake in the morning, you must take action on that goal. Even better, write down what that 2-Second improvement is going to be.
2. Download the app Habitshare (this has been an absolute life changer for me) and add: Make at least one 2-Second improvement every day. It will be your number one habit you commit to. Then

you can keep building out your habits from there over time.

### **So, how did we come across 2 *Second Lean*?**

For us, it was perfect timing! It was freaky timing, and only just in time! We have a business in New Zealand, located right at the bottom of the world. (Please come and see us soon! We would love to welcome you here! It is a beautiful country full of friendly people and thousands of great sights to see.) We manufacture concrete bricks, pavers, and retaining blocks. We import a lot of beautiful stone paving and walling products. 90% of our business is manufacturing. (You can check us out here: [www.premier-group.co.nz](http://www.premier-group.co.nz)). Premier Group NZ started as a landscape design and construction business. Over time it has evolved into a manufacturing and importing business.

The pillars of our company mission are to deliver happiness, create raving fans, and beautify our world! In essence, this means we put culture first, growing people and treating them like owners. They then serve our customers at the highest level, which creates raving fans, which in turn creates a steady stream of referrals. The third pillar of our mission, beautify our world, means every product and service we provide now and in the future; must beautify homes, neighborhoods, and the cities of our customers.



### **So back to our story:**

The landscape business began, in 2002, when I was just 18 years old. I was absolutely clueless about running a business, let alone how to build a great one. The business grew over time, and most of my learning came from making endless mistakes and trying not to repeat them. I made mistakes in leadership, management, finance, sales, marketing, operations, and so on. Thankfully I was blessed with a very patient and wise father who supported me all the way along with financial guidance, support, and funding. (He

is a world-class accountant, I reckon, the best in the game). We began manufacturing wet-cast concrete pavers in 2007 in a small way. We had a small drum mixer, a barrow, a primitive vibrating table, and a few plastic and steel molds, all under a blue tarpaulin covered Lean to!

Our landscaping team would produce about 80 (450mmx450mmx40mm) pavers per day. On the days that were wet we couldn't be out onsite landscaping. This involved shoveling builders to mix and cement into the mixer, mixing the concrete, scooping it out into the molds on the vibrating table, and then sliding them into steel racks to cure overnight. We would then demold them the next day, stack them onto pallets, and leave them for 30 days to cure. At first, we used the pavers on our landscape jobs, from there, I started to get out and about in my ancient white Hilux Ute with samples to show to other landscapers and resellers. Sales started to grow, and we kept throwing money into the manufacturing side of the biz to solve our growing pain problems! (These days, we use our heads, not our wallets to problem solve! If only we had known back then!) We had endless quality, staffing, health, and safety issues. One of our team members was literally seconds from being crushed into a thousand pieces in a giant concrete mixer due to a faulty electrical switch. He was cleaning inside the mixer when it started, and I still have no idea how he escaped! It still gives me nightmares to this day! We had endless customer complaints due to issues with our quality and service. I was working crazy hours and 6 to 7 days per week. Life was difficult, stressful, and mentally draining. I'm not one to give in, so we continued to stick it out. Gradually, we improved the process, which in turn, improved our quality and service. I managed to secure some supply deals with some of NZs biggest DIY big box stores, and sales continued to grow.

Then came the crazy years from 2010 to 2013. We grew over 100% year after year after year. This, of course, brought many fresh problems and more pressure and stress than ever. Then in 2015, I discovered the magic of reading good business books. Why I hadn't done this earlier, I still have no idea. I never thought of it, and no one ever suggested it. Go figure! So, with this

reading came a lot of fresh inspiration, ideas, encouragement, and help! I stumbled across the idea of putting culture first as a way to run a business, and we just went in boots and all! We shared some great videos we found from an online shoe store Zappos and Southwest Airlines, and a few others, brainstormed with the team, and launched!

We shared with our team that from now on you can treat this place like it's yours as you are effectively owners of Premier Group NZ. The only rule we said is this: Cheap and cheerful! So, the next day I came in, colorful bunting was hanging everywhere, staff wearing crazy wigs, spontaneous Nerf gun fights, and scooter riding! As I watched, in amazement, the phones kept ringing. I could



hear customers asking, "What is going on!?" Our happy staff replied, "Oh, not much, just the team having fun!" The change overnight was incredible. From then on, the culture first journey continued,

and I could write many pages about that but let's keep moving forward.

It is important to note that in 2015, we hired some expensive Lean consultants who came highly recommended by several business friends. They were great guys. They taught us some great stuff, but as anyone knows who has tried this, a Lean consultant cannot change your culture. So, we spent tens of thousands of dollars on these guys over a few months. We made some great improvements but of course, the culture didn't change. Lean didn't stick! After a few months, we decided to let them go and keep trying ourselves but with pretty limited success.

Then, 2016 was another record year in business in every way sales, profits, and production. To crown it all off, we won the coveted Best Workplace of the Year Award in the IBM Kenexa Best Workplaces competition! It was a mind-blowing experience, especially as it was the first year we had entered! We were pumped, positively fizzing! Riding high would be an understatement! You

know the old saying pride cometh before a fall? Well, this probably summed up our situation pretty nicely. To cut a very long story short, we threw a lot of money into a problem we were having. At that time, we were the proud owners of the only semi-auto wet cast paver production line in New Zealand. The problem was we were growing so fast that our wet cast paver production could barely keep up with the demand. We did not use our creative genius and improve the machine (or maybe build a second one). We threw over a million dollars at a brand-new machine from the UK! Go figure, right? But we were riding high with confidence, and it seemed like everything we touched turned to gold. So, what could possibly go wrong?...

### **Well, as it turned out, pretty much everything....**

We made endless bad decisions in the planning stage and the commissioning stage. We were a real mess by the time we started producing the product. We had our top customers screaming at us for undelivered orders. Our staff was under pressure, working long hours and often seven days per week. Pallet loads were rejected, second-grade pavers were piling up in the yard, and on and on. Three months into 2017, we were in a real pickle, like, a real big pickle! We had thrown at least another million dollars at the project, and the extra costs kept on coming... We just kept throwing more and more money. There were staffing resources issues. We had to bring our sales and CS staff into the factory to help. Our biggest customers were threatening to go elsewhere. It was blowing up. Big time! Out of the blue, a friend I hadn't heard from in years sent me a message on LinkedIn, "Hey, bro have you read *2 Second Lean* by Paul Akers?" I was searching for anything that might help us out of this mess. Maybe this was it?! So, I ordered a hard copy immediately and ordered the CD to play in my Ute. It turned up within a few days, and I began listening on my daily commute. Before I finished the book, I shared my new learnings with the team. They said, "This is our only hope. Let's do this! We gotta go all in!" Then, I got the leadership team to read the book too, and we regrouped and got stuck in.

We quickly built two new manual production lines based on

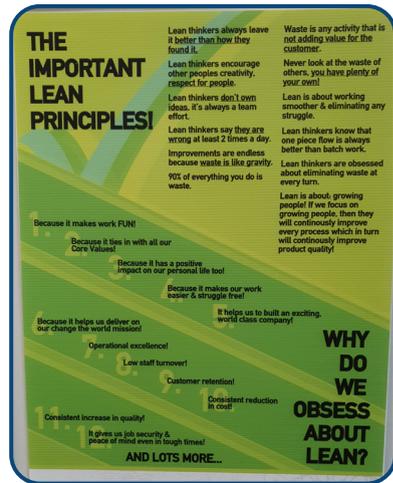
the old designs from previous years and totally ditched the idea of trying to keep producing on the new line. We were still getting up to 50 seconds every day. Just crippling! We restarted our morning meetings using a new agenda. We started 3S-ing everywhere (sweep, sort, standardize), created a 2SL group chat, and published new posters proclaiming quotes like: “We are at war with waste!, Fix what bugs you!” and many others. We started morning improvement walks. We started mini Kaizen events. We went all in.

I personally spent the next three months helping to get things in order at the yard and in the factory, spending long 12 to 14-hour days on the forklift and on my feet. Sweeping, borrowing, shovelling, and whatever else it took to tidy and clean the place. Each day I would return home covered in dust and grime and absolutely exhausted. I self-appointed myself as the acting operations team leader and started restructuring and rebuilding the team and growing new leaders and people. I coordinated with the team, suppliers, and contractors during my cleaning time at work. I was even fielding calls from angry customers. It was tough. Very tough. So, in the midst of all this chaos is where our *2 Second Lean* journey began!

Now five years have passed, and we are able to look back on this time as a massive learning curve, a very expensive one. It forced us to regroup, restructure, and put disciplines back into place. Many of them we had let go and implemented many new ones. I can honestly say that *2 Second Lean* helped to save our business. I am forever grateful to Paul and his amazing book. It gave me fresh hope, courage, and determination to dig deeper than ever before! *2 Second Lean* is not just business changing. It is life-changing! Have I said that already?



In March 2023, we hit a new team record of 252 improvements in one week from our team of 75. Incredible stuff from the team! At the time of writing this chapter, we average between 120 to 200 improvements every single week. It is astonishing if you compare it to any average business or organization. A few years back, we also set up a new division in our business. We created Premier Business Academy to help all our wonderful customers and friends to improve and transform their businesses and lives through our training and resources. You can find us here: [www.premierbusinessacademy.co.nz](http://www.premierbusinessacademy.co.nz) All the resources are completely free as our way of paying it forward and to show what we have learned from so many generous people in the Lean community. We are also about to publish our new book, *The Premier Way – How to Build a Fun, Happy Culture, and Purpose-Driven Business!* (Email me if you would like a copy: [bernard@premier-group.co.nz](mailto:bernard@premier-group.co.nz) Or if you have any questions I can help you with, please message me on Whatsapp: 0064 21 228 5336) Also, be sure to check out our AME tour. It gives a lot of valuable insights into our business and the Premier way from which you are welcome to take the ideas for your own business! We are 100% committed to our Lean journey now and into the future. Life without Lean is unthinkable.



and transform their businesses and lives through our training and resources. You can find us here: [www.premierbusinessacademy.co.nz](http://www.premierbusinessacademy.co.nz) All the resources are completely free as our way of paying it forward and to show what we have learned from so many generous people in the Lean community. We are also about to publish our new book, *The Premier Way – How to Build a Fun, Happy Culture, and Purpose-Driven Business!* (Email me if you would like a copy: [bernard@premier-group.co.nz](mailto:bernard@premier-group.co.nz) Or if you have any questions I can help you with, please message me on Whatsapp: 0064 21 228 5336) Also, be sure to check out our AME tour. It gives a lot of valuable insights into our business and the Premier way from which you are welcome to take the ideas for your own business! We are 100% committed to our Lean journey now and into the future. Life without Lean is unthinkable.

To finish off my contribution to this amazing book. I want to share some things we do at Premier Group NZ. Let's call it the Premier Top 10 tips! These will help you to get started!

**Here they are:**

1. Start by calling an all staff stand up meeting so you can share your new learnings and let the team know how you would like to start building a fun, Lean culture! Be sure to share your goals and not just how but also why. And use this meeting to answer any

questions they may have. Tell them that from now on you are going to treat and train them like owners and that in return you expect them to act like owners. This is a big commitment but the best one you will ever make. Over time you will build a team of owners. This will take huge pressure and onus off you.



2. Now, get started! Do NOT delay! Production then perfection and just get started! Imperfect action is a million times better than perfect inaction!
3. Start a full team 2SL group chat on Whatsapp for sharing the before and after pics and videos!
4. Start the morning meeting and never miss it! Start very simple and improve it by the day.
5. Share 1 video chapter from the 2 *Second Lean* book each day in the morning meeting. Get your team to take notes then discuss their learnings after the video.
6. Start rotating the leadership of the morning meeting around to all staff. This is amazing and helps you to build leaders and improve engagement.
7. Keep reminding the team to download the Lean Play App and to listen to the 2SL book during their commute. You can't force them to do this but keep explaining to them that the more they learn the more they can earn. A lot of leadership is follow up.
8. Start the weekly Lean champion awards! This makes Lean even more fun and gets healthy competition. We do it like this: We

give away weekly prezzie card prizes for the Lean champions and runners up for our 3 overall departments. We announce these at the weekly all staff meeting we hold on Zoom. This is a highlight of the week and this competition has really taken our improvements to the next level in a big way. Both in the volume and the quality aspects.

9. STOP holding onto secrets. A business should be like an aquarium! You can see what is going on. It is all transparent! This is especially important with your financials. Share everything and train your team how to read and interpret financial information. Your financials are effectively the scorecard for your biz and if you don't share them then you are not treating your team like owners and you will certainly not be able to get them to act like owners!

10. Keep the rope tight and don't give up! If you give up when it all seems too hard then you are giving away a lifetime of joy for the sake of short term pain! Lean is the hard thing that makes everything easy!

Here are some very important Lean principles you need to learn by heart and practice daily. I suggest you turn these into posters for your walls too:

1. Leave it better than you found it.
2. The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.
3. The standard you tolerate is the standard you will get.
4. Improvement starts with I.
5. Lean thinkers don't own ideas. It is always a team effort.
6. Improvements are endless because waste is like gravity.
7. One piece flow is always better than batch work.
8. Never look at the waste of others, you have plenty of your own.
9. Lean thinkers cheer on their team mates.
10. 90% of everything you do is waste.
11. Growing people is the first priority.
12. Eliminate the struggle. Work should flow.
13. Within struggle lies opportunity.
14. Mistake proof every process.

15. Standardization is the basis for continuous improvement and employee empowerment.
16. If you don't have a standard you can't improve. Any perceived improvement becomes just another variation of the process.
17. Lean thinkers say they are wrong at least twice a day!
18. Lean leaders are humble, servant leaders.
19. We are in business to improve the life of the customer.
20. If you want to improve your products and services, start by growing people. Then they in turn will improve every process. Therefore quality and service improves.
21. Eliminate class distinctions.
22. 1 % better every day.
23. The 2 underlying pillars are: A deep respect for people and a deep respect for resources.
24. Lean is the hard thing that makes everything easy!

It is also important to train your team about (what we call) the Improvement filter. We always filter our improvements through these four principles:

1. Safety
2. Quality
3. Simplicity
4. Speed

It is important to understand that every change must improve at least 1 of these principles! We also cannot sacrifice one aspect for the sake of another. For example, if we simplify a process at the expense of safety, it is not an improvement.

In conclusion, it is not easy to build a fun Lean culture. It gets easier over time as you gather momentum. On the flip side, if you never try then you will always have an average or even toxic culture, which is not easy either! Ask yourself; Which option would you prefer? Short-term pain for long-term gain? Or endless pain and misery? It's that simple. As Paul often says, Lean is all about just one word: Leadership. So, if you are not committed to becoming a better leader every single day, even just by 1%, then you are always going to struggle to build a great business, let alone build a fun, Lean culture.

Here are my favorite books of all time (and I have read hundreds) that I recommend you read over and over again until all the timeless principles become part of your DNA:

1. *2 Second Lean*
2. *Banish Sloppiness and Fall in Love with Precision.*
3. *Lean Health*
4. *Lean Life* (all these by Paul Akers)
5. *Today and Tomorrow* by Henry Ford.
6. *Improvement Starts with I* by Tom Hughes
7. *The Toyota Way* by Jeffrey Liker
8. *Scaling Up* by Verne Harnish
9. *The Great Game of business* by Jack Stack
10. *Extreme Ownership* by Jocko Willink (this one is very helpful for improving your leadership skills)

If you have any questions about how to get started or how to sustain your journey, please voice note me on Whatsapp at 0064 21 228 5336. I am always happy to help if I can! Please connect with me on LinkedIn too: Bernard Powell. I also host an amazing group chat called: *2 Second Lean* dream team! This is a group of like-minded Lean thinkers who share their improvements, ideas, and questions! There are a few simple rules to qualify for the chat so please let me know if you would like to be included. Be sure to message me with your feedback about this chapter too, as I would love to know what parts resonated with you! Ok, that's enough for now or we will be here all night! Good luck with your life-changing Lean journey!



## JOSH SPRINGER

CEO • GRINON INDUSTRIES (BOTTOMS UP BEER) • MANUFACTURING

To say *2 Second Lean* has changed my life and company for the positive would be the understatement of a lifetime. I could go on and on about how it has improved every aspect of how my life, relationships, and work function, but instead I think I will let our culture do it for me. I asked everyone in our company to write a paragraph on what our company culture is to them, *2 Second Lean* being the hub of that culture, below is the result.



*Bottoms Up company photo. Which is fun and super Lean because you don't have to get everyone together any time you need to update it!*

## **MATHEW MUNCY • PROCESS ENGINEER**

The Bottoms Up culture can be described in one word...trust. Trust is provided to everyone, from the CEO to the interns. With that trust, we are expected to make processes and improvements every day, without approval. With that trust, we are able to do our jobs without being micromanaged by people, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), or quotas. With that trust, we are treated like a human being and not an emotionless robot. With that trust, Bottoms Up and its culture has no ceiling.

## **SAM GOULD • PROCESS ENGINEER**

My belief is that our culture is the result of multiple factors. To me, they include:

Willingness to change, accepting criticism, and moving forward. Fluid communication, ability to ask for help, and teamwork throughout the entire office with other departments and colleagues in mind. Striving to better ourselves and the company as a whole for our customers, effective business practice, and our future. The final, and in my opinion the most important factor is our people. This small but amazing group respects their peers immensely. The commitment to colleagues and the company, positive attitudes, approaches to challenges, and genuine care for each other is what makes GrinOn such an awesome and unique place to work.

The highly efficient work ethic keeps everyone motivated and applied to their tasks and colleagues do whatever possible to improve as an individual and as a team.

## **ERIK FOX • PROCESS ENGINEER**

GrinOn has a culture that allows everyone to be a part of a team and become confident leaders. The daily meeting is the core of the culture. Each person has the chance to share and learn how the company operates. The name, GrinOn, is a large part too. Laughter and positive attitudes are contagious around here.

Although there can be stress, deadlines, defects, and general what-the-fu\*k-ery, people at GrinOn believe in the company. They

have the freedom to continually improve processes and bring their ideas to the table. Having that knowledge, knowing you are important and valued, makes a person work and feel better.

The culture encourages a person to try new things and fail forward without fear of reprimand. As you improve your work, you improve yourself. The result of that culture is a better product and better customer service.

## **WARREN CARROLL • PROCESS ENGINEER**

GrinOn Industries culture has many great benefits and is one of the best in the world. The three things that stand out to me, and that I find most beneficial, are freedom, community, and growth. Every individual is free to improve their work environment. To make their job better, to have the flexibility to work around life's challenges, and freedom to make mistakes without judgment. I have never worked in a place where every person is actually on the same team, trying to accomplish a common goal, all while treating each other with true respect and love. I don't know if there is a better company when it comes to the community or the unity of everyone.

Experiencing such a culture with so many different personalities and types of people is not only impressive but has changed who I am and continues to do so. In describing the freedom and the community that the company culture has, I can see that growth is not separated into its own category but is spread throughout the culture. It has been so great to have the ability to grow as a person, as a group, and as a company. One of the main focuses of the company is to grow people, to provide an environment for people to grow in and feel safe to do so.

## **JOSH SPRINGER • PROCESS ENGINEER**

I have never been a part of something so truly great. For me, it overwhelmingly comes across as a feeling. It's a feeling of belonging, of appreciation, like I'm part of something much bigger. Feeling like we are doing something to change the world and yet it has nothing to do with what we actually make. The more I think about it, the more our culture seems to be a paradox when

compared to social norms. It is insanely disciplined but because of that discipline, it is also easy going, laid back, loose, and free.

Our culture is very supportive of outside the box thinking and trying new ideas, yet is full of harsh criticism. It is through that criticism that our ideas become their best. We fail often yet we improve every day. We focus heavily on ourselves yet we seem to function like one big organism. We have a chat/channel where we actually tell on each other! I can't think of any other place on the planet where that wouldn't cause a catastrophic meltdown and yet it brings us closer together. We have something truly amazing here and I am proud to be a part of it.

## **CECILIA GLICKFIELD • PROCESS ENGINEER**

Our culture

- ... is a nurturing “figure it out”.
- ... is “don't be a d\*ck”.
- ... is a toss in the fire...with a bungee cord.
- ... is d\*ck jokes and highdeas and gatorbeers.
- ... is creative, ambitious, and vocal.
- ... is individual and collaborative.
- ... thrives on innovation.
- ... creates leaders.
- ... has 9 lives.
- ... builds and rebuilds fundamentals.
- ... is a collective genius.
- ... balanced, supportive, empowered, deliberate, and committed.

## **ZACH BEATTY • PROCESS ENGINEER**

To me, Bottoms Up is a true team culture. We regularly work on projects and problems in teams, while aiming to highlight our individual strengths. The culture itself is a work in progress, just like our processes. The more we improve our processes, the better the culture gets. At Bottoms Up, our biggest strength is the comfort in which we work. We have driven out fear so that we may aim to fail forward and ultimately improve both individually

and as a team. The lack of barriers and fear allows the best ideas to come to fruition. There is no winning or losing as a team. But we will ultimately win as a team because of our culture. You don't win a championship without first building a championship culture.

### **NATHAN BOYER • PROCESS ENGINEER**

Not to sound too sentimental or lame but I'd say you could sum up our company culture in one word...family. You might say, "Well duh, of course, we're a family" and you'd be right but, I think it's the nuances of the family dynamics that really shine here. What I mean by this is (and under my definition of these characteristics) is that families are full of characters, people who aren't afraid to be themselves. Silly uncles, talkative aunts, goth sisters, and jock cousins, but as part of one's family, we are accepted for who we are, which of course, allows for the inevitable ribbing of such characteristics, but that's family. Families also aren't afraid to fight. Anyone who has a brother or sister knows exactly what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about the kind of irrational fights you had as kids, but the disagreements you'll have as adults. The kind in which fear of hurting their feelings takes a back seat to the honesty the conversation needs. In the end, you truly care about them as a person but also how that person affects the family. Finally, the bond a family shares would be similar to the success we all want for this company. We all have different roles and are off doing our own things, but we all come together each night for dinner at the table. We check in to see how things are and make sure things are OK, because if things aren't OK, we come together as a whole to set it right. Don't fu\*k with family!

### **TRISTA GARNER • PROCESS ENGINEER**

GrinOn is eclectic and welcoming. Everyone is willing to help and we're all here to play on the team. This is an environment where you are encouraged to be just a little bit better every day and to use your voice. You can speak up without fear of retribution. The guys here are true teachers. From being one of the students, watching them take time for each other and transfer knowledge

is a huge part of our growth, not only within the company but personally too. We're here to learn, grow, and change the world. Don't get us wrong, we love some good raunchy fun. Collectively we all see how our work contributes to the overall goals of the company. Our communication is probably one of my favorite qualities. It is so important, and we execute it tremendously well. There is comfort in being trusted to do your job and not having to run improvements up a chain for approval. Lastly, I love coming here every day. I know I can learn and teach others. I have a fricken' blast when I'm here. So much so, I have said to CC, "I just want to hang out with everyone from work!" 1 or 4 too many times.

We love to bullsh\*t with each other, but when it comes down to it, we all share the same core values under this roof. I think we can all agree, GrinOn is the shit!

## **BRYAN NYMAN • PROCESS ENGINEER**

GrinOn Industries is the most culturally driven company I have ever worked at. We all work as a team to serve the customer. We do not blame any person for a defect, but we look towards improving the process. Our team allows us to rapidly identify issues and use corrective action to fix the process or problem. Our team is also a very close-knit group. No single department is isolated from another. Not only are we all close at work but we all enjoy hanging out with each other outside of work. Our culture is a family.

## **BAE REH • PROCESS ENGINEER**

The first time I ever walked into GrinOn Industries I noticed that people are super friendly and helpful. Everyone would just tell me to keep asking questions in order to learn. When I do ask questions, they answer my questions quickly and informally. The second thing I noticed is that the shop and the office are very organized, and everything has labels. It's not perfect but still very effective. People are very open-minded, productive, and innovative. We always have something to do. The most outstanding part about this company is the morning meeting. We gather to review our

sales, improvements, and defects. We discuss fixing our mistakes, suggestions for change, and review any problems. It is a really effective way to move forward. It makes us feel like we are part of something bigger. The time here is very flexible. You are trained in many fields and stations, not just the one you apply for. This is a huge benefit for us because it allows us to fill spots if another employee is ever absent. I never hate to be here; I always look forward to work and learning every day. Everyone at GrinOn is the reason why I love this job.

### **ASHTON WILLIAMSON • PROCESS ENGINEER**

Bottoms Up company culture is one where I can truly be myself. I am allowed and encouraged every day to put my ideas on the table and make changes to anything that I see needs attention. Never have I worked somewhere that a top priority is taking care of yourself through self-improvement and education. I look forward every morning to coming in and attempting to learn something new or make something, someone, or myself better than it was the day before. I believe that Bottoms Up Beer is more than a beer dispensing company. It is a place of growing people to go out and take over the world in how they see fit. Bottoms Up culture is similar to that of a cult but without the sex. We all love and want what is the best for each other. When someone asks about our company I sound as if I have been brainwashed by the Lean culture and am willing to drink the kool-aid any second.



## BRAD CAIRNES

**CHIEF MOTIVATOR & KEEPER OF THE CORPORATE CULTURE**  
**BEST DAMN DOORS • CABINET DOORS**

---

About 5 years ago I picked up a copy of *2 Second Lean*. Even though I was an avid student of the Toyota Production System and the Theory of Constraints, honestly I had no idea what I was about to get into.

If I try to give you a synopsis of what *2 Second Lean* means to me and the profound impact it has had on my company, my life and me personally, it would only be a snapshot. You would only get what is impacting me as I write this, not the whole picture. If I were to only focus on one aspect of how Lean thinking has impacted my life, it would be like comparing a grain of sand to the size of the earth. I believe that learning to become a Lean Thinker encompasses everything you need to become successful.

When I introduced Lean concepts to my company, I found it was an amazing way to engage people and get them to put their brains to use. Then I met Paul Akers, the author, and he has impacted every aspect of my life. Now my best friends are lean maniacs. I met them all through Paul. In a nutshell, I went from a broken cabinetmaker to a highly successful manufacturing facility. Now I am implementing leading-edge technology and robotics. The change has been nothing short of astounding. As soon as I learned the principles of *2 Second Lean* and started making 2 second improvements, my employees started following suit.

You can't make a life change at work without it impacting your home as well. Now my wife has a YouTube channel called "Lean It On Home". She takes her Lean tips and tricks and shares them with the world.

My advice for everyone is, don't read the book once, twice or even 10 times. Make it a routine to revisit it over and over again. Just like the ocean, the deeper you go, the more you learn and then the deeper you can go again. Paul leaves no stone unturned. If you read the book, use it as a guide and heed the wisdom. If you only read and don't take action, you will continue to struggle through life and it will be your fault.

In the end, how could you possibly argue with something that makes your whole life better in just 2-Seconds at a time?



## **BRANNON BURTON**

**AREA MANAGER • SUNROC CORP**

**CONSTRUCTION, MASONRY, READY MIX, SAND AND GRAVEL**

---

*“Lean for the common man and woman.”*

In 2004, I was hired by a large excavation and utility company near Salt Lake City, Utah. Although I was new to construction, it became painfully obvious that the industry had a lot of problems. Employees would leave garbage in the equipment, defective pipes had to be dug up and repaired, construction sites looked like a bomb went off, workers stood around waiting for instructions, and newly installed products were frequently being run over. The list went on and on.

Despite our problems, we managed to be profitable year after year. We’d meet up for strategic planning every year to come up with new ideas to motivate our employees and solve our problems one by one. After doing this for 8 years and trying everything we could think of, our problems in large measure persisted. It felt like a boxing match against an opponent that couldn’t be injured. No matter what we tried or how hard we hit, we barely made a dent. We’d track a new metric, try new software, provide incentives, create new procedures, and then rinse and repeat. We were stuck... doomed to careers full of quality problems, employee problems, arguments, and safety issues.

Light started to illuminate our path when we bumped into W. Edwards Deming. We knew it offered the shift in mindset we were looking for, but how could this knowledge be applied to a construction worker? Unfortunately, this too made no meaningful impact.

It was not until I went to a Lean construction class that I finally found the answer. For the first hour or two we learned about the theory of Lean, but the application for the worker still eluded me. I thought, how in the world could I take these complex theories and simplify them in a way that changes the behavior of a pipe layer or an equipment operator? About midway through the presentation, the instructor showed a video with loaders feeding an asphalt plant explaining the difference between value-added and non-value added work. The video was so simple, so clear, so applicable. It distilled the concepts we had been learning about into something that everyone could understand and use. After the class I waited for everyone to leave so I could talk to the instructor and figure out who made the video. He told me it was Paul Akers, and that Lean is about fixing what bugs you. That was the key! That's how we can finally implement Lean! I hurried and wrote it down, "fix what bugs you."

- **Stubbornness is being replaced by enthusiasm.**
- **Cynicism is being replaced by curiosity.**
- **Openness is replacing arrogance.**
- **Precision and care are replacing sloppiness and indifference.**
- **Care and concern are replacing aggression and indifference.**

Since then, *2 Second Lean* has opened our eyes and changed our people. Our employees learn about their work and how to improve their work every morning. Difficulties that were just "part of the job" are being modified to make them less burdensome. Equipment that used to be covered in mud, littered with paper cups and sunflower seeds, are now replaced by clean well-maintained equipment. Supervisors are able to see waste, make improvements, and fix problems.

Employees are excited to be allowed to fix what bugs them and be creative again. We have dozens of problem solvers beginning to use their talents and abilities to improve their work. Rather than just being a number, they are agents with the ability to influence and improve their circumstances.

Instead of feeling like our problems are invincible, we have confidence in changing our circumstances. *2 Second Lean* solves so many problems simultaneously it's almost mind boggling. We're able to work on safety, quality, training, leadership, employee engagement, and cost reduction all at the same time. Our creativity and problem-solving skills have been amplified in ways that were previously an impossibility.

Although problems still exist and we are far from perfect, we know there is no limit to our potential because we understand the simple recipe for daily continuous improvement with the help of *2 Second Lean*.



# KANSAS

**BRIAN ROESCH**

**TEACHER • QUINTER HIGH SCHOOL**

---

In 2010 FastCap gave my students 100 FastCap ProCarpenter Tape Measures at the IWF show in Atlanta, GA. The gesture was beyond gracious and started a lifelong relationship that I cherish to this day. I am Brian Roesch, and I teach Industrial Arts at Quinter High School in Quinter, KS and this is my *2 Second Lean* story.



My students and I were over the top excited to take all the tape measures back to Quinter High School and put them to good use. We packed them in our carry-ons and headed to the airport. After several pat-downs, complete bag empty procedures, and swabs for gun powder we convinced the airport security that the coils in our bags were not bombs but the most amazing tape measure on the market. Upon returning to Quinter, I wanted to send a thank you to FastCap, which prompted me to do a web search and led me to Paul Akers. Pecking around the FastCap website I discovered that you could send Paul a short “pithy”

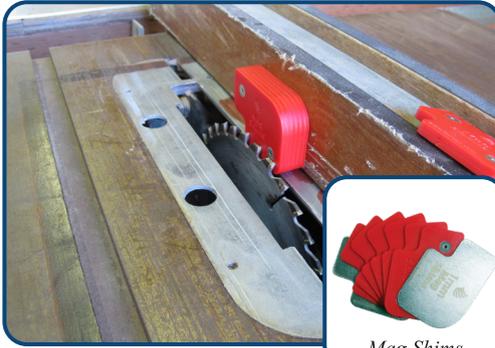
video of a product idea. Having taught at the time for 23 years, I had several ideas floating around in my brain and thought what a great opportunity to maybe get a product to the market.

The first two ideas Paul thought were good, but not marketable. The third and fourth product ideas I sent him are now in the FastCap



*11th Finger*

lineup (the 11th Finger and the Mag Shims). During this process, Paul was mentoring me in the 2 *Second Lean* process, explaining how to 3S my shop, making 2-second improvements, and “fixing what bugs you.” Thanks to Paul and his wisdom, my teaching career got a huge shot in the arm. Implementing the things that Paul was teaching me was making my school shop fun to be in again. My students are now saying, “let’s 2 *Second Lean* this.”



*Mag Shims*

To this day I have never met Paul Akers in person, but I feel like I have known him for a lifetime.

Paul and 2 *Second Lean* have changed my life as an educator. Quinter High School and I are forever grateful to FastCap and Paul Akers.



# CONNECTICUT

## BRIAN WAY

**OWNER • BP WAY • TOOLS, HARDWARE, MILLWORK INSTALLATION**

---

My Lean journey was certainly not in a straight line, neither was the impact of it on my life. Currently, my company primarily does two things. We fabricate pre-cut foam inserts from FastCap's Kaizen Foam to fit many of the major tool box manufacturers. We



also help larger companies and organizations with tool control and management systems. We help guide them through the layout and design process of their tools in foam and other materials to help eliminate waste in their daily workflow.

Now let me back up a bit. From a young age, I always seemed to create a place for everything. When I was in private school and we had our own individual desk units with a corkboard backer, I would take thumbtacks and place my pens and pencils on each of them, so I always knew where everything was and when it was missing. When I was home, I would organize the hooks on my father's pegboard and hang all the tools to keep everything neat, organized, and in my line of sight.

Fast forward a bit, I went to a trade high school for carpentry. When I graduated (1991), I then went to school to learn the electrical trade, as I wanted to understand different phases of construction. After 5 years in general carpentry, I opened my own woodworking shop.

Oh, the growing pains. I knew nothing about Lean... never heard of the word. I barely knew anything about business.

However, I did understand workflow through the shop, from where the materials came in and were stored, to the cutting, machining, finishing, packaging, and loading, all in a flowing direction. I also understood the time it took to change over router bits, cutter heads, and sawblades. I remember on multiple occasions people questioning why I had so many routers set up in a row on a wall. I explained how it was more cost-effective to buy multiple routers and standardize the bits than to keep on changing the setups.

In 2002, I started a second company to sell woodworking products online. I looked for the oddball and specialty items for the industries. I brought on FastCap as a product line right away, as I fully understood the line since my company started using their products back in the late '90s. Since early on, I watched every video by FastCap (Paul Akers).

I had an OK run of 15 years in the custom woodworking industry. However, in 2007 the economy collapsed, and my largest customers were going bankrupt and forced my company into bankruptcy as well. After I closed, I spent a short amount of time at a local company to re-gather my thoughts then decided to open up a millwork installation company. This is when things really started changing for me.

I now had to figure out how to get a shop full of tools and equipment into a 14-foot box truck. Around the time I built the 2nd truck, which was more dialed in than the first, FastCap came out with Kaizen Foam and it changed the way I work. I integrated mobile carts that would lock into the truck and were, of course, fitted out with Kaizen Foam. These carts would allow us to quickly wheel onto a job site with little to no setup time and to be able to start working immediately. It made us extremely efficient on the job site, always having every tool right at our fingertips and more importantly knowing if it was missing at the end of the day. This



methodology allowed us to practically eliminate leaving tools behind, saving lots of money and time purchasing new ones. Companies were starting to take notice of our level of efficiency and skillset that set us apart from everyone else. We had endless amounts of work and higher profit margins due to becoming Lean and efficient on the job site. Yet still, I did not know the word “Lean.”

Having a truck with this much money invested in it and having this truck been broken into and robbed while working in cities made me say, “There has to be a better way, why do we rely on such insufficient locking systems for box trucks?” That question drove me to invent a product to help the situation. After many versions, trials, and errors, I developed a product called the TailLock. This new product would allow me to remotely lock and unlock the rollup door of the truck from my key fob. The process of creating this product allowed me to create more time-saving products in the coming years that we currently sell in our industry.

Sometime around 2009 during The American Innovator show by Paul Akers, before *2 Second Lean*, Paul was talking about the age-old conversation of surrounding yourself with people better than ourselves, and often the only way to effectively do this is to go after them yourself. Being a FastCap product dealer I learned that Paul would be at the JLC construction show in Rhode Island so I emailed him immediately and told him I am 90 minutes from there and would like to come to help him set up and breakdown the booth and work with him at the show. To this day, some of my most memorable time spent with anyone outside my family is the night after the show closed when Paul and I sat and talked for hours at the Cheesecake Factory in Providence, RI. We stayed until the restaurant closed.



Tail Lock

That night, among many other things, we discussed my box truck, i.e., a mobile shop. He encouraged me to make a video about it, which I did. I believe it was my first video on YouTube. In 2013, two years later at the JLC construction show, he filmed The American Innovator episode inside my mobile shop. The things that were set in motion because of this moment in time will be for another story. If you would like to see the video, you can google LEAN TRUCK and it will be the first YouTube video that comes up. During that video Paul called me a “Lean Guy”, but it wasn’t until later that I learned the actual meaning of that. Not only did the truck intrigue him, but my remote locking system did as well. So much in fact, that he wanted FastCap to produce and sell the Tail Lock.



The airplay following this event from different magazines and videos were integral in inspiring others in their quest for small space layouts and organization.

I created foam inserts for all my Tanos/Festool brand boxes, it was the only system available at the time. People were noticing, so I started creating Kaizen Foam Inserts and selling them online.

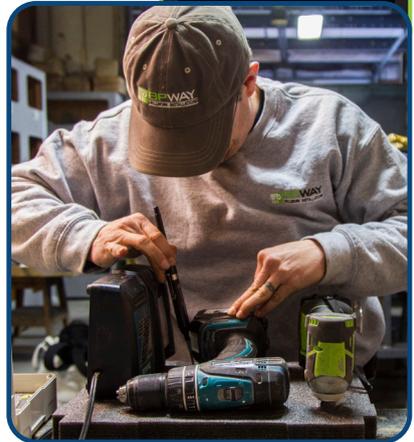


The first time I read *2 Second Lean* it was in an editor’s version that Paul had emailed me. I thought, how could Lean be so simple? Is it really this easy to implement? It was around this time that we were designing and about to build a new kitchen in our home, so we took the principles of Lean and integrated them into

the kitchen design. Shortly after it was complete, Paul asked if I would like to attend the 2nd Lean Summit held at FastCap. I spoke about how Lean philosophies impacted my kitchen design as well as my place in the millwork industry.

Currently, we have customers all over the globe that we supply standard and custom foam inserts. We stop the struggle for them by pre-cutting the foam to fit the toolbox. Kaizen Foam allows the customers to layout and cut their tools however they like, according to the methods in which they work. It is quite a Zen and satisfying process, that starts them on their Lean journey of bettering themselves in their industry. We aid them in their journey of visual accountability through creating tool control systems that allow them to standardize

their processes and workflow. Because of social media, we are all able to learn from each other...everyone enjoys posting their designs while gaining the accolades among their peers. There is nothing more enjoyable than watching how this little product has transformed lives and the way people work. From tradespeople, bicycle mechanics, military personnel, automotive and aeronautical industries, the list goes on.



When creating a Lean environment in a shop or service environment, an important factor is having everything at your fingertips. Eliminate the time wasted of looking for your tools or gear. Placing it back in the exact spot from which you removed it. Standardizing toolbox systems throughout your company or facility means that no matter where that employee is sent, there will be no wasted time in acclimating to the environment.

For me, implementing a Lean philosophy in my home and business has allowed me to see and eliminate waste. No more overdoing and overthinking in life. No more underutilization of space and work zones. No pre-cut material stock on the shelves.

Most of our orders are fabricated within 1-2 days from raw materials. Lean allows us to produce a thousand different SKUs and ship them out in a timely manner. Our raw materials are stored in racks above our 6 CNC machines, easy to access. Keeping the work zone tools accessible and, let us not forget, Kaizen. Always, always, continue to improve.



## CHRIS HOTZE

CRESCERE CAPITOL • CEO

**COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT, DEVELOPMENT, & MANAGEMENT**

---

In early 2015 I came across a video on YouTube from an entrepreneur named Paul Akers. I found Paul’s energy captivating and I watched as many of his videos as I could. Paul was so serious about “continuous improvement.” In Paul’s videos, he mentioned that he wrote a book called *2 Second Lean*. The book sounded approachable and less academic than the boring Lean materials I had previously studied.

There was one video in particular that sold me that I needed to purchase *2 Second Lean*. It was a video of Paul at his house, showing his blowers and his tools stored in an orderly fashion on the backside of the guest house. Paul even set up the blower so you could save time by walking up to the blower and attaching it to your back from its stored position. Everything Paul did was an effort to save time and create order. His passion to help you see his Lean lifestyle drew me in.

I ended up reading *2 Second Lean* on a cruise to Alaska. To most people, reading a book on Lean on vacation would seem weird, but not to me. I left that cruise more inspired than ever. I knew that I had come across a major breakthrough in my life that I could apply both at home and in my business.

I came back home more enthusiastic than ever. I immersed myself in the culture of *2 Second Lean*. I started with my home life, I organized my garage and my tools using FastCap’s Kaizen Foam. We cleaned out closets, simplified wardrobes, cleaned out sock drawers, and generally got rid of “things that bugged us.” With all of the success we achieved at home, I started implementing

Lean in our commercial real estate business by adding Lean improvements to our daily huddles. One of the first things I did was realize that I was spending too much time at my desk and not enough time out in the field, so like Paul, I did away with my chair, my desk, and ultimately my personal office (I even made a video about it).

We asked team members to come up with ideas to improve the way we manage our real estate assets. We created videos and maps for the way we monitor our property mechanical systems. We even started planting drought-resistant plants at our properties to eliminate wasted water resources.

*2 Second Lean* brought excitement to our team. We found out that everyone on the team wanted to help support a culture of continuous improvement. In every aspect of our operation, we started making videos about where we were wasting time and resources. It was eye-opening, and a game-changer for us. We started thinking about the amount of time we were spending in the car on our commute or running to the bank. Technology was implemented to do away with receiving physical checks from tenants.

We moved all of our leases, contracts, and paper documents to the cloud and eliminated all of our filing cabinets. This freed up so much space in our offices. Instead of having to go into the office to retrieve a document, we could get the document from anywhere at any time. It was liberating. We changed our entire organization and the way we interact with the world based on *2 Second Lean*. These improvements continue to this day. Ultimately, we credit the fact that we have a large social media presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube to *2 Second Lean*. Through social media, we discovered a Lean way of sharing stories about our tenants and our properties.

More than anything, Paul Akers is someone who wants to bring out the best in others. I can think of no other book that captures the energy of the author as *2 Second Lean*.

Our ultimate Lean pilgrimages would never have come if we had not read the book *2 Second Lean*. We have been honored to visit FastCap with Paul and see the operation firsthand. We have

been able to visit Paul and Leanne Akers' beautiful home and see where FastCap was born. We were able to go to Japan with Paul and see Lean applied in so many areas of Japanese life...one of the most memorable trips of our lives

Ashley and I have been majorly impacted by this book and consider it to be an honor to be on this Lean journey with Paul and all of those who have read *2 Second Lean*.



# WASHINGTON

**CLYDE LIBOLT**

**LIBOLT RESIDENTIAL DRAFTING • OWNER • DRAFTING**

---

I started my Lean journey the first day I heard Paul Akers on his Saturday radio show called, “The American Innovator.” He shared with his audience his passion for a new way of thinking and a new way of observing everything we do. He interviewed interesting people who shared their Lean experiences. He vocalized his newly formed Lean journey with us, the radio audience, every Saturday morning and we learned together, and we all shared our Lean failures and triumphs. I could not wait to turn on my radio each weekend.

Ten years ago Paul Akers introduced the concept of 2 *Second Lean* and he put this idea to print in his first book. This book made the basic tenant of continuous improvement seem kindergarten easy. All of us have daily frustrations and just by fixing what bugs us, we can improve our daily life. Certainly, we can all come up with an improvement that could save 2-Seconds a day, right? In reality, this idea, when acted upon, becomes a game-changer. It creates a Lean culture that will transform the trajectory of any organization. It changes our focus from trying to come up with the corporate home run improvement to having each individual consistently, purposefully, and strategically develop their focus on the small, single acts of Kaizen. It is rare that an improvement only saves 2-Seconds, but it is common when a small improvement saves minutes or hours a day for the rest of our lives.

My business is residential drafting. To complete a set of permit-ready construction drawings for a house takes hundreds of steps. Drafting a custom home is like building a car from scratch. There are items that need to be added for safety, standards that

need to be met, and items that cannot be forgotten. All this is done so that the final product has beauty, individuality, structurally sound, and can be constructed easily and within budget.

I have worked by myself out of my home for 16 years. I have been using Lean since I have met Paul and I have practiced *2 Second Lean* since its inception. I only recently hired a part-time employee who also works from her home. The hardest part about practicing Lean for me was being the sole proprietor. I was the only one coming up with ideas and making improvements. I turned to Paul's online videos of his team members' improvements and although they worked in a totally different field, I asked myself, how can I apply their concept in what I do?

As my procedures got better, I found that the word of my quality was getting out, which in turn produced more and more work and more and more clients. The struggle was real, but I continued practicing *2 Second Lean* and now I am experiencing the benefits.

The first plan that I completed 16 years ago took me 5 weeks to complete and it was my only project at the time. Back then I worked long hours, six days a week. Today, my assistant and I average 35 projects at a time, and we can complete a plan within a week. My working hours have been cut to almost half and yet I am grossing five times more money than I made 16 years ago. Slowly, my procedures morphed into a system that creates a great product with greater detail, and I have a clientele that comes back to me time and time again.

If you have not tried *2 Second Lean*, then let today be your starting day. Time is wasting away. My biggest regret is not knowing *2 Second Lean* earlier...it is that life changing. It's been an imperfect journey, but it's been fulfilling.

Thanks, Paul, for your mentorship and for conceptualizing *2 Second Lean*.



# NEW YORK

## DAVE LELONEK

### STICKY RX REFINISHING SOLUTIONS • OWNER EXOTIC AUTOMOTIVE INTERIOR RESTORATION

---

*2 Second Lean* and the overall coaching of Paul Akers has made a profound impact on my life and leadership of my business.

In 1997, at the age of 27, I started my first business entitled Automated Machine Technologies, Inc. (AMT). As a mechanical engineer and a person with intense experience designing, building automated assembly, and testing machines I decided to go out on my own. While the business has been successful, quite frankly, I did not have a clue how to run or lead an organization. It certainly slowed my growth both as a person and also within the business.



In late 2015, I started another business which is a division of AMT entitled Sticky RX Refinishing Solutions. This entity provides the interior trim restoration for Ferrari, Maserati, Lamborghini, and other exotic automobiles. We are a global company that provides services to dealers, direct car owners, and

independent workshops. Our growth has been beyond amazing and that growth has presented some serious challenges.

During the 1st quarter of 2019, I was very frustrated with our volume output and the overall culture of the business. I

was frustrated with myself and my team. The culture here was very relaxed and we did not adhere to good standards. We had been experiencing sloppy behavior from our team: often tardy, poor attendance, no sense of urgency, no sense of respect for the customer, no respect for the equipment and tools within our facility, and most of all, no respect for waste in every possible way.

As the frustration grew and I was working more and more hours (often 70-75 per week) to compensate for all of our waste and overall poor culture that I created, I began to look for a way to make a serious change. While I had been exposed to Lean in the past, I did not take a good grasp of it because of how it was presented. The normal way of presenting Lean is very academic and wasteful in the process.

At this point, I discovered Paul Akers on YouTube and I started paying very close attention and watching many of his videos. The inspiration was nothing short of mind-blowing. I watched the FastCap tour videos along with those of Seating Matters. I was hooked. I said to myself, "I want this culture and level of perfection in my organization."

So, at that point, I started to put together an implementation plan. Now, I had not even read *2 Second Lean* yet but did plan to do so in the near future. The YouTube videos were enough to get me off running.

I compiled a PowerPoint presentation to roll out to my team on April 1st, 2019 (April Fool's Day—but it was no joke, let me tell you). The weekend prior, as I completed the presentation, I decided to email it to Paul. Within 3-4 hours of clicking send, Paul responded to my email with an audio message which was very inspiring and helpful. That day I started my friendship with Paul and ever since we communicate nearly every day. He is a very dear friend and he has made a substantial impact on my life and leadership of my company. I consider Paul my Lean and Life Coach.

The roll-out of the presentation was generally well-received, however, there were some concerns and some mild negativity. Ultimately, 2 people were fired very shortly after. It was clear these individuals were going to be resistant and bring down the efforts of the positive members of the team. There was no way I would

# BEFORE

or will tolerate that kind of attitude. They had to go, as I was determined that this would be our new way of life and we would build an amazing culture.

If I told you the past 1.5 years was easy, that would be a lie. No more could I turn a blind eye. I now had to face every single uncomfortable situation and do so immediately. Many very uncomfortable conversations had to be had. Frankly, I'm surprised more people did not get fired and I'm surprised no one quit. We started making changes every single day. We started implementing a new culture and behavior and banishing sloppiness. Cell phones are now banned unless used on breaks and lunches. We have a time standard and alert system for the start and end of work, breaks, and lunches. My team perfectly complies with all standards. You will never find a single thing out of order in our break room or coffee area. It's



perfect every single minute, without fail. Our bathrooms are sparkling clean every second and we all take turns cleaning them. Respect for people and resources continues to grow each and every day. I can now say I love every one of my team members and everyone values this organization. We are truly a family and respect and care for each other. The change is mind-numbing.



# AFTER



We started this journey slowly and persevered by adding new elements every few weeks. At first, we did not have daily morning meetings. We had a 1-hour meeting on Mondays prior to lunch. Each team member would make 2-3 improvements per week. It was casual, too casual. By this point, I had read 2 *Second Lean* and was now starting to implement more and more. We started doing stretching first thing each morning. Then we added daily 3Sing. We then decided to do add 30 minutes of 3Sing every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday while every Tuesday and Thursday we perform 30 minutes of *Soji* (Japanese for clean). When we *Soji*, we do so in complete silence—no talking, no music, no running of machines aside from a vacuum cleaner. The team has come to love our new *Kata* (routine).

For the past 6-8 months our new *Kata* includes daily morning meetings, 3Sing, *Soji*. It has also included the development of our people via audiobooks, videos, discussions, and improvement walks (each person illustrates their prior day's improvements). We study the 8 wastes, Taiichi Onno's 10 precepts, and are

learning the Japanese language.

When I think back to what we were before this journey, I'm frankly embarrassed. I managed chaos for nearly 23 years before I woke up and pulled my head out of my ass. Finding Paul and becoming a Lean thinker has changed my life and there is no going back.

Each day I come to work with energy—ready to rule the world. The improvements my team makes often bring tears to my eyes. Our business is growing and it's very profitable, yet we keep delivering more and more value to our customers without raising prices. Our wages and benefits continue to rise, and our costs are going down.

The biggest take away for me comes down to Human Development. If you want an amazing organization that runs like a Swiss watch, you must spend your time developing yourself and your people. Sure, Kanban systems and 3Sing are powerful tools, but your people are your greatest asset. Spend substantial time developing them and everything else will just be magic.



# WASHINGTON

**DAVE WECKWERTH**

**ACCEL CONSTRUCTION CONSULTING • PRINCIPAL • CONSTRUCTION**

## **Our Responsibility**

Being in construction for 39 years has given me a lot of opportunities to see the problems associated with the construction industry. Starting as a Pipefitter in the Alaska Oil fields for 12 years and then 27 years as a Commercial Carpenter, Foreman, Superintendent, General Superintendent, Project Manager and District Quality Manager and, most recently, District Lean Manager has brought me through the trenches of nearly every realm of construction—projects ranging from small offices and strip malls to 1.3 billion-dollar resorts and half-billion-dollar high-rises.

It is well known that once you hit management level on the job site the weeks get incredibly long and filled with problems. We get good at firefighting if we want to excel in our field. I did get good at it and a lot of the time it took 6 or 7 days a week, 12-16 hours a day. I had a wife and 5 kids to take care of so being good at my job seemed like the best way to assure our fridge was always full and needs were met.

In the fall of 2014, when I was 52-years-old and a Superintendent for a high rise in Honolulu for one of the biggest general contractors in North America that I was diagnosed with stage III Colon Cancer. I was given a 29% chance of survival before the chemo and radiation. I went home to



Washington State to fight cancer. I spent a lot of time sitting on the couch during chemo and radiation treatments reflecting on life. Then the meeting came when they told me the treatments weren't working. Odds just plummeted and I was told to go home. Sitting on the couch my reflections kept revealing one regret. I never regretted not building more buildings or making more money or being more successful...I regretted being in construction management. I missed so much of my kids' lives on the now seemingly trivial job sites. My wife did most of the child-raising and dozens of camping, fishing, and family weekends were missed.

My "family memories" bank was sadly sparse.

God had bigger plans and the cancer was cured and I was back to work in two short months after that meeting. The job didn't feel the same. My regret kept entering my thoughts. I spoke of the need for a new process of project delivery with one of the VP's of our company and we called it the need for a "new recipe." He told me to go to the 2016 Lean Construction Institute (LCI) Congress in Chicago to see

what this "Lean construction" could do. It was where I first read *2 Second Lean* and spent 4 full days listening to Lean testimonies and stories from teams that were succeeding at this "new recipe!"

"Fix What Bugs You" stuck in my head and the simplicity of *2 Second Lean* haunted me. I was now District Quality Manager and reported to management the need to implement Lean in our district. They looked at me with doubt and trepidation. "Too good to



be true” was mentioned and “try a little something.” I went by our new high-rise project on numerous weekends and would see our Superintendent and Foreman. It bugged me...my couch regrets were being lived out by our next generation of leaders. I stopped in and asked them, “Why are you here every weekend?” They both said in unison, “Timecards! We have to audit them, code them, print them, get each worker to sign them, get them approved, scan them, and submit them every week! When we find errors, we have to track down the workers, clarify the hours and get them to sign-off on it and get them approved before Monday.” It was a monumental process. I told them I wanted to fix it. Their response was typical, “It’s the way it’s always been done! Nobody will ever change it. It would be great...but...”

I researched digital timekeeping and one of the industry-leading executives of a leading platform happens to be coming to Honolulu. I set up the meeting and got management’s approval to do



a trial. There was so much doubt and a few cautiously optimistic team members. We had numerous foremen in their 60’s who never picked up a smartphone or iPad. These men had it mastered in minutes.

As we implemented, word started getting out and one of the Safety Manager from the US head office called and told me to stop because he needed signatures on every timecard stating they had not been injured and the hours were correct. I asked, “Why?” A tactic I learned at LCI Congress. I continued with, “When have we ever not paid when a worker realizes his hours were incorrect after signing?” Accounting said, “Never.” I asked, “When have we ever denied a claim when an injury showed up after the signature? HR said, “Never.” So, I replied back to safety, “No. I will not stop unless the CEO sends me an email to stop.” He was not a happy man.

The next call I got was from the North America headquarters telling me to stop until they run security checks. This could take a year or so. I knew there was no interface between the software and

our network so my answer to them was the same. “No...not unless the CEO sends me an email or calls and tells me to stop because he sent an email earlier that year to all employees challenging us to improve how we do things and am just following his orders.” Again, they were not used to being told no.

By now we had 3 job sites up and running on the new process with praises coming from accounting and field operations! We had pushed the envelope and were having great success! My District Management was getting a lot of heat from national headquarters and US head office and asking why we were “going rogue!” To their credit, they stood behind my efforts.

Two more months went by and I was at the same high-rise project where this started. I was on the deck of the office across the street from the site and I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned to see our General Foreman there. Decades in the trades and typically very serious and professional. He looked emotional. He said, “Dave can I talk to you?” “Of course,” I replied. He went on to say, “Dave a lot of people talk about the need for change and nothing ever happens, so when you said you would change timekeeping, we had a hard time believing it.” Now he was truly emotional. “We saw you push the digital timekeeping through against objections and direct orders to stop and it has changed! I have spent the last few months at home with my son on weekends. Thank you.”

I got a lump in my throat. A life-changing moment just happened when I realized we had not just changed the job site bottom line (thousands of hours of overtime throughout the corporation will be eliminated) and we had not just lowered the stress level at work and the lives of these workers, we had just changed the life of a little boy. We changed a family. Maybe we eliminated a small part of the regret that haunted me! One thing bugged me enough to act. We pushed through all obstacles to change it by asking, “Why?” The success of this high-profile struggle was a fire in the gut of many people to look at the thousands of processes we have that are filled with waste and opportunities to ask, “Why?”

Another month went by and all job sites were now on digital timekeeping. My phone rang and it was national headquarters on the caller ID. “Here we go again,” I thought.

It was a National Manager—the one that told me to stop. He said, “Dave, I wonder if you could do me a favor?” I said, “Of course, if I can!” “We are having our National Tech Summit in Las Vegas next month and I was hoping you could come and present on the digital timekeeping you guys are doing.”

They are now writing their own software hoping to catch up to the system we implemented and districts across North America have switched. They are looking at all the processes for things that bug them.

To me, Lean is not just about improving the bottom line, and the monetary benefits are great, but those benefits pale in comparison to the improvement of our workers’ lives. Giving them the opportunity to improve what they do and how they do it! Giving them a voice and eliminating the “hired from the neck down” mentality.

I feel that as leaders of our individual industries, whatever industry we are in, if we see an opportunity to improve our bottom line, it’s our job to pursue it. If we see something that improves the lives of their children and family and improves their work-life balance, it’s not just our job, it’s our professional and moral responsibility.

A satellite-style map of British Columbia, Canada, with a blue location pin icon placed over the Vancouver area. A dark blue speech bubble with white text is overlaid on the map, pointing towards the pin.

# BRITISH COLUMBIA

## DAVID ENDACOTT

ATKINSON LANDSCAPING • CO-OWNER • LANDSCAPING

---

### OUR LEAN JOURNEY - ATKINSON LANDSCAPING

#### Who are we?

My name is David Endacott, and I am a co-owner of Atkinson Landscaping with my business partner, Matt Atkinson. He got to choose the name, but I get to write about our Lean journey!

We are based in Cloverdale, BC. A small town, just outside of Vancouver. We have been in business for 5 years and specialize in landscape maintenance and simple landscaping projects. Most of our projects are smaller-scale lasting no more than 2 weeks. Due to the nature of our business, it is crucial we operate efficiently because we generate money on volume not margin. To be profitable, we need to have simple systems to empower and quickly train our teams making Lean a powerful tool for us.

#### Our Introduction to Lean

We were introduced to Lean by our good friend Allen with Northwestern Property Maintenance. Allen, coincidentally, installed synthetic grass for Paul, and shortly after meeting Paul, implemented Lean within his own business. After reading *2 Second Lean* and witnessing the impact it had on Allen and his business, it was a no brainer for us to implement Lean as well.

We have now been practicing Lean for approximately 2 years. It has not been all smooth sailing from the start, nor have we harnessed the full potential of Lean. However, the aspects of Lean that we have successfully implemented has pushed us to the next level as a business.

## **Some of our Learning Experiences**

Our company operates out of a farm and for a long time we had no covered areas. Additionally, it rains where we are located...a lot! At the beginning of our Lean journey, we had 3 Lean meetings per week. Sometimes the meetings were great—we would have a nice warm morning and experience the sunrise together while talking about improvements and sharing coffee and donuts. However, more often, these meetings consisted of standing in the freezing cold, getting poured on, standing in 6 inches of mud, or cramming into an 8 foot by 20-foot storage bin that was made from a recycled dumpster! Often it was some combination of all of the above. It is difficult to get people's creative juices flowing when they are trying to combat hypothermia.

Another learning experience we had was correctly empowering people to understand and enjoy Lean. Many of our staff, at first, did not seem to get it. A few staff left after implementing Lean and this may have been a factor in their resignation. I am sure our team not understanding the importance of Lean was more a reflection on our training and implementation than anything else. If we were to do it again, I would focus on implementing as many improvements as soon as possible personally and let the results speak for themselves rather than trying to “force” people to suggest ideas.

Lastly, sometimes when an improvement was implemented, I would call “Anti-Leans” because it would increase the time it takes to perform a task or just don’t quite make sense. These situations can be tricky and if poorly navigated can discourage team members from suggesting future improvements. “Anti-Leans” come from good intentions, working with individuals on their ideas will help keep them excited to continually suggest daily improvements.

## **Successes**

Although we have had shortfalls, we have seen many more successes. Some of our staff loved it from the get-go, even with our inadequacies on implementation.

One team member, in particular, Cody, really seemed to take it and run with it. Cody still works for us and often sets the example

of what a good Lean leader looks like. I remember in one of our first morning meetings, he shared with us how he prepares his dog food differently now to save him time every morning. He is also responsible for one of my favorite improvements “The Lean Lockup.” This consists of flipping the padlocks on our containers to access the keyhole more easily on the locks (see **IMPLEMENTED LEAN** below).

Matt and I have worked hard to build a business that focuses on growing and empowering our team. It has always been a goal to set a benchmark of what a top employer looks like. Lean has given us the ability to give increased ownership to our staff allowing them to have a say in the way the business is run. Lean helps move our team members from thinking like an employee to thinking like an owner.

In the future, we plan to move our company to an “open-book management” structure which would allow our employees to see our financials and how our money is spent. This would give them the ability to see how their improvements directly influence the bottom line. Our hope is that opening our books puts our Lean journey on steroids.

We are thrilled with the way our company has grown in the past 2 years with the implementation of Lean, but it feels like we have only scratched the surface of its full potential. We are excited to see what Lean will look like after 20 years of implementation!

### **Closing Notes**

Much of our journey has been influenced by other business owners and it would be wrong not to mention them. First, Allen at Northwestern introduced us to Lean and I have borrowed many ideas from him. Another large influence on our company is Mike at Augusta Lawn Care in Washington. Many of my improvements listed below were inspired by ideas at their yard.

Lastly, I want to thank Paul for allowing us to write this for his book. I connected with Paul when I got his phone number off a podcast. When I finally worked up the confidence to messaged Paul, he was extremely encouraging and offered me the opportunity to share our story in his book! Not to mention our team loved hearing the voice message from him!

If you ever want to get a hold of Matt or me, please reach out to us! We love networking and learning from other businesses.

**You can reach us at 778-588-5088, Call anytime!  
Enjoy your Lean Journey!**

## **IMPLEMENTED LEAN**

### **The Lean Lockup**

“The Lean Lockup” is one of my favorites improvements because of its simplicity. With the lock being flipped, our staff can now unlock and enter the bin much quicker. We were able to implement this Lean instantly with no pre-work required. Immediately we were saving seconds multiple times daily!

### **Trailerless Mowing Setups**

We used to haul around a cargo trailer to store our mowing equipment. However, this was inefficient as extra time was spent connecting and disconnecting, backing up, and maneuvering in tight neighborhoods. Removing the trailer completely saved huge amounts of time. Not to mention the saved costs of not having to purchase, store, and maintain trailers.

### **Blade Sharpening Station**

The blade sharpening station was set up to ensure we always have sharp blades on our lawnmowers. Dull blades are placed in the top bucket, and when sharpened they are placed in the correct spot on the bottom shelf depending on mower type. This will be improved as we are working to reduce the number of different mowers we use, limiting the number of different blades needed.

### **The Fertilizer Bin**

The fertilizer bin stores all our products we apply to our lawns. On the right are bins that store the product and measuring containers. Each bin has a written description of what the product

is used for and the application rate. Additional product is stored on the left side of the bin. An improvement we can add to this is a Kanban system to automatically notify our office when supplies are running low.

### **The Meeting Area**

The meeting area, also used as a shop to fix equipment, is one of our latest improvements. This gives us a place to have an adequate morning meeting. We can light the entire area with 2 floodlights. It works great and keeps us dry!



# CALIFORNIA



## DERREK HOLLAND

**THE CLOSET DOCTOR • PRESIDENT • HOME IMPROVEMENT & CABINetry**

---

I have always been the type of person that looks to improve the way I work. If I can do it better, faster, and easier, I will find a way to do it. When I started my own business, The Closet Doctor, my dream was to have a place that looked like a NASCAR race shop...everything in perfect order and spotlessly clean. In the early years of my business, I toured several “big” shops in my industry, companies that I looked at, and thought to myself, “This is what we need to become.” I had no clue that they were doing it all wrong! Ten to twelve years into our journey, we were far from that race shop dream. In emulating other shops, we had brought in tons of inventory stored in thousands of square feet of warehouse. In spite of all this inventory, we were constantly short on items that we needed to complete projects, causing us delays in finishing jobs and regular phone calls to suppliers to rush an order. I realized what we were doing wasn’t working and that there had to be a better way.



I was aware of Lean and its concepts and had tried to read and understand several books on the subject. They were complicated and looked at the whole of the process of Toyota and their production system for their multibillion-dollar company. It was extremely difficult to understand and pull out concepts that would work for our little closet and cabinet business that would really benefit us.

I was aware of FastCap because we used their original product, the Fastcap screw covers (a brilliantly simple solution compared to what was available previously), and their amazing tape measures along with a few other items that we had picked up

after seeing them at a woodworking show. Around 2011, I became aware of the book written by Paul Akers, *2 Second Lean*. I ordered it up and was surprised when it arrived at how thin it was! How good could it be being so short? I sat down on a Sunday afternoon and devoured it in about 2 hours. The concepts jumped off the page and into my mind, I could see exactly how they applied to my situation and our business. I wanted what Paul had discovered! I promptly ordered more copies of *2 Second Lean* and passed them out to employees, and we jumped into our Lean journey.

We promptly went through all the inventory and junk that we had accumulated and sold, threw out, donated, or sent back materials to our suppliers. At the time I had a supplier that I was months behind on paying about \$15,000 and when we went through our inventory, we realized we had about that much of his product on the shelf that we would never use! We changed our production process, moved equipment around, and improved many other processes. Everyone in the company was excited as we improved the business. We developed and improved standards on how to do things and systems of ordering from our suppliers that eliminated mistakes, and the constant running out of things. Our employees came up with solutions that solved our problems. All of this came from the inspiration that was provided from a simple, easy to read book by Paul Akers.

Today we run a profitable business, with great employees and a great culture of continuous improvement. When people come and see our business, they can't believe how clean and organized our shop is, how much we produce from such a small space and how great our employees are. The mentorship of Paul and the network of other people and business that I associate with because of *2 Second Lean* is amazing and has truly changed my life.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity. As I took the time to write this out, I realized I need to say thanks to you. Your book, your mentorship, the group of people that you have facilitated coming together around this common idea, has been amazing and made a huge difference in my life. Most of all the time that you have taken over those years to be a friend. Thanks for all you do for others. Anything that you ever need help with I am there for you.



# PORTUGAL

**FILIPE MARQUES**

**TORRE • CEO • HOME COUNTERTOP MANUFACTURING**

---

## AN ANTIDOTE TO AN EMPTY LIFE.

My name is Filipe, I live in Portugal in a small town by the sea where I own and manage a manufacturing company that produces granite countertops for kitchens. I'm 40 years old and my "real" Lean journey started 5 years ago. I say "real" because before I had already experienced a standard approach to Lean (with consultants and charts) that did not produce results or inspire me.

I discovered *2 Second Lean* by accident while searching the web for standup desks. I stumbled upon Paul's Lean Desk video and was immediately hooked. Reading Paul's book *2 Second Lean* I could perfectly relate to the struggles most business owners share and was fascinated by the simple approach described in the book to create a culture of continuous improvement. I say simple, but not easy. Unlike other "Lean approaches," which let the leader off the hook, in order to have a chance to succeed with *2 Second Lean* I discovered that it requires a complete and absolute commitment by the leader to initiate and sustain a lifelong journey of personal development and improvement. I could tell you all about the great things *2 Second Lean* has made for my business, but the biggest impact was really changing my life.

Through continuous personal improvement, I left behind some addictions I carried for decades. I improved my health and fitness, having completed a full Ironman Race and other triathlons. I traveled around the world to learn with Lean friends in the USA, Canada, Germany, the UK, Ireland, and Japan. I'm a better husband, a better

leader, and I like myself much more. As good as all this might seem, it's the end result of the daily relentless process of reading books, facing never-ending problems, confronting my fears, failing miserably, and gaining the courage to stand up and try one more time.

It's tough and messy, and oftentimes it simply sucks. So why go through all this trouble when there is always the easy road? Why do I keep pushing myself further? Because the easy road leads to a hollow life, full of regret and disappointment. That life is not for me, so I'm fighting. Life is hard. It's supposed to be hard and that's ok. I welcome adversity, it's the opportunity for me to grow and become even closer to realizing the full potential God gave me. Remember that you only live once. Life is not a rehearsal...it's the real thing. I wish you a long and meaningful life!



## GEN VAGULA

**AMPRON • CO-OWNER & CEO • LED DIGITAL GUIDANCE MESSAGE BOARD**

---

My story is mostly a personal development into what I am now. This story began in 2001 when I joined the Estonian Air Force after finishing the Estonian Aviation Academy. My specialty was air surveillance systems. At that time, we only had one, Soviet era, long-range radar and that was it. We had to start from a blank sheet and build up the organization. Together we purchased a long-range radar from Lockheed Martin and a couple short-range radars. I moved up the ladder fast and during those years I was also the Estonian representative for the NATO Hardware Committee who oversees NATO radar management and maintenance. After eight years of service, I went to reserve as an Air Force Captain.

I moved to civil aviation in the Estonian Air Navigation Services, a company that has responsibility for the air traffic control over Estonia. There I was a maintenance manager with additional responsibilities for certifications and technical quality management for all the system supports. My real personal development started there. In the military, you have your rank and are not concerned about people's feelings or concerns. On the civil side, I quickly figured out that engineers had feelings, opinions, and concerns. This was something new for me. Before I wrote all the nice procedures and introduced them, people followed them, and I got zero feedback on how they were working and if people understood them. I deeply believed in bureaucratic and complex procedures. It was at that time I started to look for solutions and started to believe in the simpler way of work environment where people would be engaged.

After eight years in civil aviation, it was time to move forward. We established my current business partner company

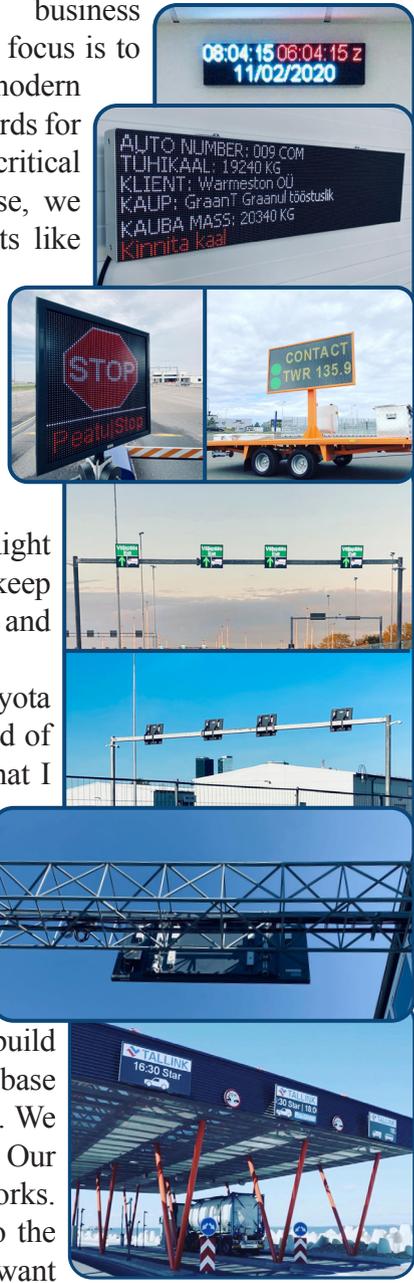
Ampron, where today I am co-owner and CEO. My responsibilities are leadership, manufacturing, business development, and marketing. Our focus is to build the world's best rugged and modern LED digital guidance message boards for ports, aviation, and other mission-critical environments. In addition to these, we build complex smart city products like bus shelters or any other customer-specific solutions.

In big organizations, I was always tied to corporate relations and had to find compromises to move through the waters. In your own company you are free (well mostly, as you are never free). Right from the beginning we decided to keep our company at a low bureaucracy and exactly the way we believe.

2 *Second Lean* and Toyota Production System (TPS) was kind of like the last piece of the puzzle that I missed. It all clicked together when I first started to look through the FastCap YouTube channel. It was exactly the thing I believed in and struggled to move towards for so many years.

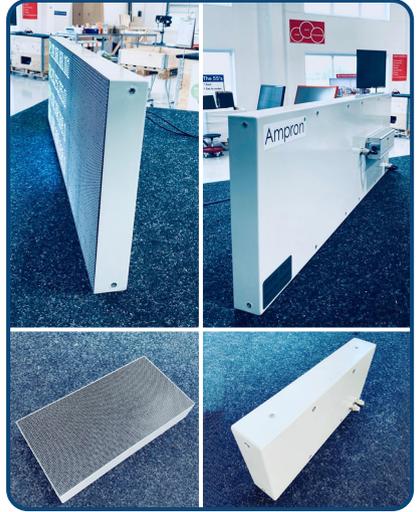
We now improve and build our organization exactly to those base guidelines and improve every day. We are very passionate about this. Our production line is simple, and it works. It is a joy. It all fits perfectly into the reality where young people didn't want to work in manufacturing for years, but they wanted their work to be meaningful and interesting. We are just barely scratching the surface

to work in manufacturing for years, but they wanted their work to be meaningful and interesting. We are just barely scratching the surface



and we have a long way to go. I have always valued the journey more than the destination, so our journey is interesting and full of interesting engineering puzzles to solve.

The biggest benefits that we see are the value that we can provide to our customers. As we minimize waste in every process we have (not only in the manufacturing but also in all the other departments), our prices do not have the added price component that takes into account the waste. That will allow us to price our high-quality products at a reasonable price level. As we are very well organized internally and things are simple, our customers do not have to worry about the



late lead time concerning rework, late deliveries, or poor quality. As our people have a good work environment and we talk openly about problems and issues, that also carries over to communication with our customers. If we solve the issues that might happen with our products during their lifecycle, we are open with customers and we acknowledge the problems that might have origins from us, and in addition to fast problem solving, we also describe to them where our root cause was and how we will eliminate it. This all contributes to trustful relationships with the customer and trust is of the highest value in the business sector that we are operating.

In summary, we see our customers, even the biggest



corporations, as a person or people. There is always a person that you are dealing with and we want to make that person's life easier. Whether she or he is a procurement manager, project manager, CEO,

or technical, etc., they all have their workday full of challenges and

tasks. If we can make their life easier with a better product, better communication, simpler description, and less paperwork, then we have met our goal and mission. In the long term that will have its impact on business results.



## GEORGE PATRINOS

**LAWSOME PROPERTY LAWYERS • PRINCIPAL LAWYER AND FOUNDER • LAW**

---

Both Paul and I are of Greek heritage, so I like to think that maybe Zeus, King of the ancient Greek gods, engineered us to meet. How we met is the stuff of Greek legend! My name is George Patrinos and I am a lawyer in Sydney, Australia. I was born and raised in Sydney. I went to Sydney University and graduated with degrees in Law and Economics.

Before I set up my own law firm, I worked for one of the top law firms in Sydney, Blake Dawson Waldron (now called Ashurst). I am so grateful I had the opportunity to do so as it was the dream of many young lawyers to work in a firm like Blakes and few achieve it. It was a wonderful experience and I made so many friends and contacts—people that are important to me to this day.

Not many lawyers of Greek (or other non-English speaking) heritage worked for top Sydney law firms in the early 1990s. It was not just a source of pride for me but also for my parents who migrated to Australia from Greece in the early 1960s. My parents wanted a better life for their children, and they loved Australia, a prosperous, large nation with many opportunities. They also loved their Greek customs and language and as a result, I am not only a proud Australian, but I am fortunate to be able to speak, read, and write Greek which has come in very handy every time I have visited Greece.

After 6 years at Blakes, I was keen to strike out on my own and create my own law firm. I did that in 2001. My firm, Lawsome Property Lawyers, has represented lawyers and other professionals in their sale, purchase, and transfer of mainly residential property

in and around Sydney.

I have always tried to provide a high quality of work and fast client service to ensure my clients get the outcome they want. I set a very high bar for myself. I am very passionate about client service. I like to find ways to make the client experience as stress-free as possible as dealing with lawyers and legal matters can be very stressful.

My work processes have been developed with the goal of allowing clients to be served well and quickly and for the most part, I have been able to achieve that but there is always room for improvement. The danger with good work processes is to become complacent as when a system works, there can be little incentive for improvement. I had improved the processes over time but by early 2017, I was keen to overhaul them and create something far superior. This was very daunting because I didn't really know how to change the processes and the thought it was all too hard—it paralyzed my thinking. To get where I wanted to go, I would need to move that mountain or get rid of it entirely—tasks that seemed way too big to handle.

It wasn't just work processes that seemed hard, my fitness was going nowhere. I was feeling like I had put on some weight and was often bloated and despite trying to follow the usual healthy eating guidelines, it did not seem to be making much difference. I decided to think laterally. The health guidelines I was looking at did not account for my Greek heritage, so I decided to see if there were eating and exercise recommendations for people like me. I had started to research this online, but my search returned so many sites that I became overwhelmed. If only I had someone who could just give me the answer I was looking for, I thought.

At the same time, I had seen friends who were in the process of giving away books they no longer needed. I was offered a book called *Ego is the Enemy* and I was immediately drawn to the cover – it was a red hardback with a picture of an ancient Greek statue on the cover. Given my Greek heritage, I felt I had to accept it, so I took it and started reading it that evening. Back in the office a couple of days after I received the book, I was simply unable to progress my work. For what seemed like ages, I was staring at the

work I had to do. I knew how to do it and I knew the usual process to get it done but try as I might, I just didn't want to start it. I knew there had to be a better, faster, and more enjoyable way to do my work and despite all my efforts, I just couldn't figure out how.

I filled the next couple of hours with routine administrative tasks and put on some podcasts to have something interesting to listen to as a distraction. I left work after that to clear my head and hoped inspiration would strike. Whenever I felt like I needed a mental break, one of my favorite things to do was to go for a swim, a gym session, and a sauna. I was a member of the gym at the Four Seasons Hotel in Sydney and it was a great facility for all these activities. Having arrived at the facility, I ended up going to the sauna hoping to sit in silence and work through my thoughts. But when I walked in, it was clear this was not to be because there was one other person in there. I did not know this man, but he looked very fit and Lean. Little did I know that on this day in March 2017, this complete stranger was about to make an amazing impact on my work and life.

He said, "Hello," in an American accent and asked how my day was going. I don't really know why but I just decided to share my sense of frustration with this stranger. I said to him that I was extremely frustrated because I just didn't seem to be able to get any traction on my work and that I had whiled away time doing administrative tasks and listening to a few podcasts instead.

He asked me what podcasts and I told him that I was quite interested in a podcast where the interviewee was discussing her view on bravery—that to become brave, one should engage in tiny acts of bravery each day until the person reached the level of bravery he or she wanted. She called this step by step process "microbravery." The man said he loved this concept and wanted to use it in his next talk. He said he would make a mental note of it and he hoped he would not forget it because he had forgotten his phone in his hotel room. If he had his phone, he would have made a note of it right there and then. We continued talking and I raised a few other concepts and again he said he would try hard to remember them. He then said to me that I should read a book which he found to be absolutely fantastic and that he thought I

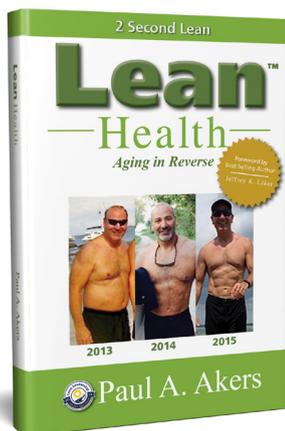
would get a lot out of it. I was all ears. He said to me, “You have to read *Ego is the Enemy*.”

I was stunned...floored. I was reading that same book! I said to him, “Are you kidding me? I’m reading that book right now!” It was surreal that this stranger should mention the very book I was reading! I was still in a state of shock, but I realized while I had done so much talking and hadn’t asked this man why he was giving talks and what he did. He told me he was in Australia for a talk he was giving on efficiency. I thought, “What? Efficiency? This is exactly what I need!”

He said he used the Lean system and when I said I did not know what that was, he explained what brought him to Lean and about his background. He told me about how he set up his company, FastCap, and how efficiency experts had told him he had great products but terrible processes and how he had transformed the company into what it is today and that he goes around the world giving talks about how to transform companies into super-efficient Lean machines. He said the key was to make at least one tiny process improvement per day and that the way to think about it is to speed up a process by at least 2 seconds each day. He said it was super simple and that doing this consistently would radically transform work processes to become way more efficient over time. I was absolutely fascinated. The approach seemed to make perfect sense to me and to fit in with the way I thought. He said he’d written a book about it called *2 Second Lean* and that it was really easy to download it for free and read it. I made a mental note to do so. We kept talking about it for a while and I had so many questions as I found his story so engaging.

Sometime later, I said to the man that I wanted to get more fit and that given he looked very fit and lean I asked if he had any advice. He said that he didn’t always look the way he did and that he had been quite overweight but that he decided that if Lean could work for FastCap, it could work for him personally so he applied Lean to his fitness and his physique and health completely turned around as a result. He said he’d written a book about it called, *Lean Health* and that if I wanted to become fit, it was really easy just to download it for free and read it. I was amazed but

I wondered if it was all too good to be true. What were the chances of meeting someone like this who seemed to have so many of the answers to my questions. I wanted to remember *2 Second Lean* and *Lean Health* so I was repeating the book titles in my mind. I also remembered there were a few things he wanted to remember from the podcasts I so I wanted to remind him about the idea of “microbravery.”



A short time later, we both had to leave and I said that if he was happy to do so, I was happy to send him an email with all the information we had discussed because it would be so easy to forget these things if we just walked away. He was really happy to do so, and he gave me his email address and told me his website name. This was the first time we actually introduced ourselves. “I’m Paul. Paul Akers.” He said.

I sent the email there and then. I felt uplifted and inspired by our conversation and I had a lot of energy and motivation to read the books Paul had recommended. I was on my way back to my office and my meeting with Paul seemed like it couldn’t have happened—that surely it was a dream. It all seemed so strange and yet, I was so inspired and full of energy. I used my phone to look at Paul’s website and I saw the books he mentioned as well as so much more information. He not only had a website but a blog and a YouTube channel and a podcast! I was amazed at how prolific he was. How does he do this? I thought to myself. The man has the energy of a modern-day Hercules!!

One entry in his blog that fascinated me was when Paul was going to be attending a World Lean Congress on the Greek island of Santorini. Santorini is world-famous for one of the most beautiful spots on earth and while I had never been, it was somewhere I would love to go. While Santorini is truly an amazing place and treasure of the modern world, it did not strike me as the sort of place a World Lean Congress would take place. Could there be some connection between Greece and Paul? And literally,

as I thought that, an email came through from Paul with an audio message:

“Hey George, OMG, I can’t believe this. I just read your email and your surname – it’s Greek right? It must be! Well, guess what? I’m Greek too! My mother is Greek! How about that? What are the chances?”

Then I was totally flummoxed because before I met Paul, I was frustrated at not being able to make my work more efficient and suddenly, I had found someone who had a system that seemed so simple and helpful, I was reading *Ego is the Enemy* and Paul recommended the exact same book to me and I was hoping to become fit, looking for a resource on Greek heritage and the right food and exercise that would achieve a better level of fitness and here was Paul, who was not only healthy, fit and lean (and with abs) but he was like me—of Greek background!!! All of this was way too coincidental for a chance encounter. Somewhere, some ancient Greek god must have engineered for us to meet!!

I was in a total state of shock and as soon I got home that evening, I downloaded 2 *Second Lean* and *Lean Health* and I read both books in one go. I had the energy you only have when you feel truly and wholly inspired and I stayed up till 3:30 a.m. to finish both books. The next day, my 2 *Second Lean* journey started and I have never looked back. It’s not just that I found a way to think about my work in terms of eradicating “waste,” it was simply that this approach was a natural fit for the way I thought. I was naturally a Lean thinker. I just didn’t have the framework to describe the way I thought and I didn’t have the toolkit that would allow me to get to a higher level.

Paul and I stayed in contact after that one fateful meeting and it has been a profound friendship for me. Equally, for Paul. He thinks our meeting was fateful because he was only in Sydney that one day—I met him. He wasn’t planning on going to the sauna and he was trying to decide if he wanted to go and relax and his wife gave him that extra bit of encouragement that he needed to go. He also NEVER forgets his phone so he was happy to chat with me when we met whereas if he had his phone, he would have listened to whatever he was planning on listening to that day and chances

are we would not have spoken. The coincidences for both of us and the fact that we are of Greek heritage and that we had a very easy conversation with instant ease and rapport was truly amazing.

After meeting Paul and reading *2 Second Lean*, I had the Lean toolkit to start chipping away at my work processes. It was as if I had been given the most incredible gift of information and tools I needed to make the work changes I needed to make. My mental block shifted and I was no longer feeling like I had a huge impenetrable mountain in front of me. I could just chip away at it, rock by rock, and see where it would take me. This consistent and ongoing chipping away created little changes that over time, led to an incredible and ongoing improvement in the way I do things.

All the Lean tools described in *2 Second Lean* were useful and they needed some creative reimagining to apply them to the context of my professional service. Certainly, thinking about what bugged me and aiming to fix it, the concept of “waste” and applying the 5 Why’s was incredibly helpful but having the following 3 questions at the front of my mind has been the key to Lawsome’s transformation:

**1. Why can’t the client have what they want when they want it?**

**2. Why does a work task annoy me and what little thing can I do to make it less annoying?**

**3. How do I issue a document faster and with higher quality by reducing the production of the document by at least one computer keyboard keystroke each time?**

There have been some very easy metrics that show the progress made since this journey began. Some examples are:

- Most client engagement documentation for property purchases or sales can now be emailed to a client in less than 2 minutes. When a prospective client telephones, I can promise to send them an email with everything they need to know either during the course of the phone conversation or within a few minutes. The old process sometimes took up to 45 minutes.

- Often with property purchases and sales, the same types of client concerns and issues tend to come up. By looking at repeating advice as a “waste,” I have created documents that cover the most common issues so that when a client telephones or emails asking about something I routinely advise about, I send them a document with the advice. This creates consistent, high-quality information that can be issued quickly, and I can be sure I have not missed anything. The time saving is enormous.

- When a client wants to buy a property, they are advised about the contract for that purchase through a comprehensive written contract review document that is issued within about 2 hours of receipt of the contract. That document covers everything a purchaser needs to know about the contract and other relevant issues and does not cut any corners.

Today, Lawsome is committed to making daily practical changes to its processes to give clients better information faster. 2 *Second Lean* and Paul Akers have had an important and awesome impact on the evolving Lawsome story.

There is one area though that Paul could do with some help. Lean is all about step by step improvement and one thing Paul needs to improve is his Greek dancing! If there is one task Lean can be applied to, it’s the classic Greek dance—the Zorba. One day, I hope to be able to meet Paul in Greece and together, at a peak in Santorini or some other island the Greek gods have blessed, I hope to teach Paul how to dance the Zorba. As the Greeks say when they are dancing, eating, drinking, and having fun, “OPA”!



# PENNSYLVANIA

**GLENN BOSTOCK**

**SNAPCAB • CEO • GLASS INTERIORS**

I can't believe it's only been ten years of *2 Second Lean* because I feel like I've learned from it for a very long time. We have held Lean Tours at SnapCab for many years and have not only utilized concepts we've learned, but we've shared the knowledge and Paul's books with many companies. I have also experienced many benefits from my time spent with Paul Akers. As he often says, "give me your top takeaways," so here are mine:

**1** *2 Second Lean* is simple. I love the idea of making things seem simple. The genius is spending the time to make them simple.

**2** Make *2 Second Lean* a part of every day with every person in the company.

**3** *2 Second Lean* is a way of life. Your accountant will struggle to justify the time spent doing *2 Second Lean* on a spreadsheet...it's counterintuitive.

SnapCab wouldn't be SnapCab without *2 Second Lean*.



**GRANGER FORSON**  
**CLIFFORD SPRINGS LIMITED • OPERATIONS DIRECTOR**  
**MANUFACTURING SPRINGS**

---

*So, what has 2 Second Lean done for me?  
It has changed 'my own' world.*

Let me take you back, I started my journey in Lean in 1995 in an automotive manufacturing company. Along came a 'Toyota guru' newly hired into our global company. He was tasked to do Lean, but as the plant directors had no clue, he built a model line using a team. They needed a Team member from Engineering, so I was asked to get involved, as I already spent so much of my time on the shop floor. What a time: build cells, quick changeover tools, creating standardized work, pull systems, and leveling boxes. I was hooked, but others around me still did not get it.



I then got an opportunity to join a consultancy company teaching Lean to UK companies. It started with 12 months plus training under the tutelage of Toyota, Nissan, and Honda engineers. Wow, the hardest, most stretching 12 months of my life. I was pushed to learn to Lean at a fundamental level and help companies change. I did this for many years, having a great time until I became bored with starting Lean and wanted to know how

you can change a company long term.

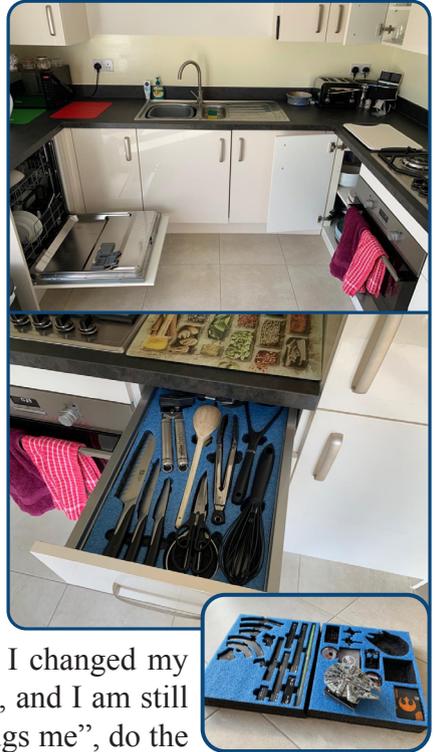
I joined a company as their Continuous Improvement Director, driving change in operations, HR, IT, and software development. I developed Lean champions and also other teams. I came across Toyota Kata as a brilliant training tool and implemented much of its approach with my direct teams. But something was still missing and I got frustrated when things did not maintain.

Then in 2015, I came across the book *2 Second Lean*. I had found a Paul Akers video on improving a cell and found the link to his book. The book blew me away. Suddenly in front of me was the final string to my bow. While I can do Lean, and I can train a few people around me to do Lean, I struggled with the culture change, and I have read many books and tried a lot of things. *2 Second Lean* was about the culture required, and it all started with me!

It started with me, because Lean is what I do, not what I ask others to do. So I changed my approach. I applied it to my life, and I am still doing it every day. “Fix what bugs me”, do the hardest thing first, clean, and meet as a team. Change your own culture to inspire others to change.

I saved for 2 years and joined Paul in Japan in 2019 on one of his Japan Study Missions. It took my thinking again to a new level. I think about Lean all the time. I realized that I had gone as far as I could in my role and by the end of 2019, I became Operations Director in a small engineering company, so I lead change from the front.

*2 Second Lean*, and my journey with Paul’s other books and videos has escalated my passion for a Lean life. My home life is



simple, my relationships are better, I influence more people, I run self-help improvement groups, I read and learn every week, and have found exciting things beyond just Lean. I have found people who understand what this can do for you—it has changed my life. I could write so much more about what I have done, but I won't, so all I will say is thank you, Paul. And to you all, just start practicing the *2 Second Lean* approach on yourself.



## HUGH CARNAHAN

**SPRINGFIELD MARINE COMPANY • VP OF CORPORATE OPERATIONS • MARINE**

I was completely stressed to my teeth. I couldn't sleep at night. I stepped into the family business that was in complete chaos—no order, no one in charge, no vision, and no direction since my father passed 4 years earlier. We had 350 employees and operated in China and the US.

We needed help. We were going under very slowly, but very surely—everyone just ignored it. Directionless, visionless, and helpless. I did what anyone would do. I hit YouTube and Google for help and I stumbled upon something that would change every aspect of my life, and the lives of hundreds forever. “Lean is Simple.” I watched that video 6 times to make sure I internalized it.

Just because it's simple, doesn't mean it's easy. Only those who are brave enough and have courage will succeed. There are hard times ahead, however, it is very simple. Do what is outlined in the book:

### **GOAL : BUILD A CULTURE THAT GROWS PEOPLE    HOW TO DO IT :**

**1) Be humble from the top down.**

**2) Implement a morning meeting that everyone from the down MUST be part of, every morning, no matter what.**

**3) Implement 3S time that everyone from the top down MUST be a part of, every morning, no matter what.**

## **It's that simple, but it's not easy.**

From that moment on, we followed *2 Second Lean* like a roadmap. We immediately implemented morning meetings with our management team. It was a miserable experience. We had 5 of our 26 managers leave us, critical positions, and employees we've had for 30 years! It was scary! What did this mean? What would happen? These people had the keys to the kingdom. How would we survive? Well we didn't even notice they were gone. In fact, strangely, everything seemed to get easier. We pushed onward and expanded morning meetings to the entire company. Despite it being easier, it was still miserable and was a daunting task with no clear roads. We just trusted in the lessons of *2 Second Lean* and hoped one day it would get easier.

I reached out to Paul Akers for advice. Just about that time, he was on a Japan Study Mission and flew over for the weekend to help! He WOULD NOT accept payment for the flight or his time. It was one of the most humbling and selfless things we've ever experienced. It was such a gift. And we weren't going to waste it. He spent 24 hours with us. About hour two, I'll never forget the words he said to me—they are forever burned in my memory.

*"Hugh, I've been to 105 countries in my life. I've visited over 4,000 factories and manufacturing plants. And this is the most Fu\*kED UP place I've ever been— and I've been to Kazakhstan. That company is sh\*t because they don't know any better; you don't have that excuse, your company is sh\*t because of sheer incompetent leadership and neglect. And I'm talking about you, points to me and Pat our plant manager. This place is completely mind-boggling. My brain cannot comprehend what I'm even looking at."*

I was completely energized and floored by this comment. It meant that there was nowhere to go but up, and we were already 3 months into the journey. Paul was direct, harsh, honest, and didn't hold back. He told us to our face what we needed to hear. There were 2 parts that made this work: 1) He was so willing to be honest; and 2) We were so willing to listen and not be defensive.

Paul said that it was clear that Pat and I understood Lean.

We were trying and we were 3S-ing and had morning meetings in place. But we weren't using them to grow and develop our people. We were just doing the motions. I understood Lean, but I needed to clone myself. It's like 1 man pushing a train. I needed to make 100 of me, 200 of me, and all of us work together to push that train. It all clicked suddenly and became clear in my mind. How did I miss such a crucial step?

From there on the focus turned to growing and developing our people – A CRITICAL step missed in our beginning stages. A simple redirection, thanks to Paul's honesty, completely energized the organization. The positivity spread like wildfire and the innovation that took place in such a short time was awe-inspiring. I could not walk past a department two days in a row and not notice something had changed for the better—things that I didn't even ask for/about/lead. The employees just did it themselves.

All the SUPER MEGA GIANT problems we had suddenly melting into memory. We never ran out of inventory, machines stopped breaking down, the place was clean, people were smiling, our work hours were reduced, people were getting bonuses, and our customers became raving fans. We were suddenly able to pivot the entire organization on a dime. We went from shipping five 40' HQ containers a week to shipping ten a week. The biggest thing of all, it was almost effortless to accomplish. What happened? We didn't over-complicate it. We listened to those who were successful before us.

## **GOAL : BUILD A CULTURE THAT GROWS PEOPLE**    **HOW TO DO IT :**

- 1) Be humble from the top down.**
- 2) Implement a morning meeting that everyone from the top down MUST be part of, every morning, no matter what.**
- 3) Implement 3S time that everyone from the top down MUST be a part of, every morning, no matter what.**

## **It's that simple, but it's not easy.**

At the time of writing this, due to COVID-19, it has been over 13 months since any executive leadership has even stepped foot inside the facility. Unlike other companies that have taken a hit, or gone under, ours still runs and operates like a well-maintained machine. It is because we focused on the culture—one that grows people.

There is not a shadow of a doubt that we would have gone out of business if it weren't for finding *2 Second Lean* 2 years ago. This is not a story or a testament to our company's greatness or hard work. This is a testament to how amazing and simple the *2 Second Lean* system that Paul Akers has laid out for all of us. That combined with humble leadership, who can admit when they are wrong, listen, and have the courage to dare to change.

Could your company make it? If not, sack up, focus on your culture, and take your organization to the next level.



# ENGLAND

## ISAAC FULLER

### COUNTY BATTERY SERVICE • ENGLAND OPERATIONS/LEAN LEADER BATTERY DISTRIBUTION AND ASSEMBLY

---

When I was 13, I began working for my father at County Battery Services in the UK. We provide quality batteries and associated products with expert knowledge, advice, and excellent customer service. My job was to take a pallet of batteries and rebrand them by taking the old labels off and putting new ones on. As I grew older, my job changed to serving customers on a retail counter in Kirkby in Ashfield.

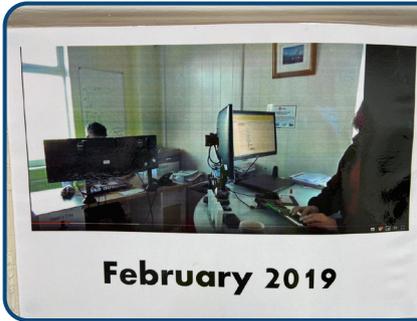


When I turned 16, I decided that I was going to study business at college and work part-time at County Battery three days a week. I completed the first year of the college course with the highest possible grade, yet I still knew nothing about running a business. The best thing I learned that year was from reading *2 Second Lean* by Paul Akers.

In true *2 Second Lean* fashion, I decided that if I wanted to learn how to run a business, I'd have to go to the Gemba. I began my full-time role in our accounts department working under the supervision of a qualified accountant, studying Accountancy at college alongside.

I kept making small improvements to the processes in the accounts department but about three months into my apprenticeship our accountant handed in her notice. My father asked me if I

thought I was capable of doing it on my own, I said yes. It was a sink or swim moment.



Over the next eight months, the accounts department became my baby, I made hundreds of small improvements and the job changed from being five days a week to three days a week. The real test was when we employed Molly (our current accountant) whom we managed to train in less than a month, Molly had no

prior accounts experience. This is where I learned the true value of a good process. She has since made the job even faster and is now doing all of our stock ordering, too!



It was when I moved to an operations manager position when I really understood that Lean is all about developing people. First, you need people to be able to see waste, then you need to allow them to eliminate it.



The beauty of 2 *Second Lean* is that you save 2 seconds at a time. My father Richard always says that the best way to eat an elephant is to start by cutting a little bit off. If I say to someone “improve our goods out process” they will look at the whole process and go into meltdown. If I say “improve how we make a box”

they will give me 10 improvements. It's all about doing a simple task very well and not doing everything at once.

Our company hasn't turned around overnight. It's through having 15 people making 15 small improvements every day to make their jobs easier. The morning meeting helps us to find the improvements we NEED to make by discussing our problems as a team and solving them together. Not only do our problems get less, but our team gets stronger and the people develop.

Paul has created a SIMPLE way of implementing the kind of Lean that you would see in Lexus or Toyota, which I have had the pleasure of seeing. It's simple because you do a little bit at a time. So, I say get your team, get your knives and forks and tuck into your elephants. Your life will improve, continually.



**JACK BUSSEY**

**JJB CORPORATION UK LTD**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR • IMPORTER & MANUFACTURER**

---

In 2015, I decided to begin manufacturing more standard products and selling them in larger quantities, rather than the custom work I had previously been accustomed to. I had hoped the move to a standard line of products would avoid the problems and continuous issues I was experiencing when making custom work. Whether it be illuminated signage or car parts, I found myself hitting the same roadblocks over and over again. It was related to workflow and managing people. I spent the best part of 3 years firefighting issues as they came up and repeating them over and over again.



Jumping forward to January 2018, my New Year's Resolution was to find some form of MRP software, or “magical answer” as I called it so that we could attempt to fix all the problems we were having with our workflow. I spent months researching different software, having trial periods, free demos, but I was never fully satisfied with them. The high price tags, the long integration times, the constant need for upkeep once they were up and running. None of them seemed suitable. I wanted a simple solution.

I had been watching videos of people's techniques and systems on YouTube one evening, and I stumbled across the FastCap Lean Tour video. I must have watched it 10 times in a single night. I was just amazed by it. “Holy \*\*\*\*, this is amazing,

it's so smooth-running and clean and tidy, people care, look at the quality." My mind was truly blown by what I had seen. If my company could have been 10% as good as what I had seen, mine would have been 100 times better than how it was. But, I pondered, where to get started?

I showed a few key team member's the same video. I kept stopping the video to talk about bits, rewinding to reiterate things. I was excited. Unfortunately, my team did not seem to share my enthusiasm, they had no excitement and did not want to jump on board with my new ideas. Deflated, I left it for a while, and I began to feel like it would never happen. In the time that passed, I was still thinking about what I had watched on Paul's video and still couldn't shake the feeling that I would not be able to influence my team to see what I had seen.

In June 2018, I saw Paul's video on YouTube offering people the chance to go on Japan Study Mission. To get there, I would need to submit a 1-minute video on why I should get a place on the trip, why I felt I needed to go. Paul saw my submission and suggested I read *2 Second Lean*. I never heard of the book. I probably read it cover-to-cover 3 times before I headed out to Japan, but for me, seeing things at the direct source was always a better way of learning. I wanted to see what Japan could teach me.

In Japan, I visited various factories and even a school to see how they show and teach respect; and non-wasteful ways from a young age. My first impressions were all to do with their cleanliness and tidiness. There was not a single piece of trash on the street, and there was no trash bin in sight. I felt these people had the utmost respect for their environment and surroundings. They cared about what they had and did not want to see it damaged or left in a bad state. Respect for people, respect for customers, respect for the product, was my biggest takeaway from that trip. I reflected, and I did not feel like my employees were respectful enough of our products or customers. Often having a "that will do" style of attitude. Another key point from the trip was quality. I constantly asked Paul (much to his probable annoyance) about the cost of quality and would a better quality of product cost a lot more. He reassured me that quality did not need to cost more. Improving

the manufacturing process and eliminating the waste would do the trick, not fancy new materials or expensive machines. You would then improve upon the improvements, and in fact, save money and increase quality.

On my way home from Japan, I stopped by a Chinese factory that I had purchased car parts from in previous years, over a long business partnership. Having just seen a near-perfect standard for manufacturing in Japan, I was shocked by what I saw in China. Whilst the manufacturing was efficient, the factory was not tidy. People were working on the floor, there was trash everywhere, a lack of respect issue was prominent, the workers did not seem respected, and in turn, the final product did not appear to be respected. By the time I had left, I had already identified a whole host of things they could have done to fix their issues, but alas, I had to fix my own issues back in Britain.

When I returned to the UK, I could immediately see all the issues, and I had ideas flying around my head as to how I could fix them. Once again, I could not work out where to start. I continued watching Paul's videos and decided the best solution was to standardize my toilets and break room. Everyone used these areas, everyone would visit them each day, it would expose everyone to my new way of thinking. I spent 3 weeks refitting the entire kitchen and bathroom area to a standard I felt was of the same quality as what I had seen in Japan. Standards for each area, signposted areas, guides on individual tasks, and an 8-step guide for cleaning the entire area.

My next step was to introduce a meeting. I did not want to make any large changes but still wanted to introduce my team to the Lean way of thinking. My first attempt was an end-of-day meeting, but tired and weary employees wanted to get home for their dinner and see their family and just were not interested. A 4 PM meeting did not fare much better. I finally settled on a morning meeting, before everyone started work, where they would be spritely and ready for their day. I stood at the front of my team and showed them PowerPoints about my stories from Japan, sharing videos from other people practicing Lean, hoping to inspire some new ideas amongst my colleagues.

As months of these meetings went by, I realized I was just talking at blank stares, they were going nowhere, and I realized my format really was not working. Small changes were being made and were noticeable around the factory, but if I wanted them to be at the standard that I had seen in the initial FastCap Tour video, I would need an extra 100 years or so. I changed the format into a quick meeting focused purely on improvements and problems and put my team to work on “group improvements.” One of these saw all 12 employees plant trees behind the factory building, over 40 trees in just 15 minutes! It was a great team-building exercise and I was delighted to see my colleagues working together so well, but something still seemed to be missing.

The next year in April 2019, I visited Japan again, looking for that elusive answer or magical solution to fix my problems. Watching videos and reading books were not helping, and due to my curious nature, I once again needed to visit the source of Lean and get all the information I could. I noticed so many more things on my second trip; visual control, signposting, clearly labeled items, numbered machinery, but one thing stood out more than anything. People seemed to know exactly where things were, know exactly what they should do, and always seemed to be in the correct place. It was training, that was the key.

I recognized one young man from my previous trip to Japan. The first time I had met him, he was merely a trainee whose job was to apply glue onto the inner wheel arches for Lexus. It was the same factory as before; he had a different color of the cap now, indicating he was no longer a trainee. He was still following the exact same instructions though; he was following a clear, set standard that told him exactly which part he was working with and how he needed to glue it. By sticking to the thorough training, he had received, he had continued to do 100% perfect work, with no variation of quality. He was clearly doing well for himself. I wanted that to be the same for my business.

I once again returned to the UK with plenty of fresh information and wished to put all my newfound knowledge into my business. There were still no massive changes made, and I still could not get my staff fully on board, no matter how hard I

tried. I was still making improvements myself and documenting these on my personal YouTube. One of my videos led me to Ryan, who owned Seating Matters in Northern Ireland, a guy I previously knew of from his many videos on Lean manufacturing to an extremely high level. Paul passed along my contact details and Ryan graciously offered to help me in whatever way I needed to continue my Lean journey. He answered all my questions, no matter how big or small. I took 3 of my team members over to Northern Ireland to see the Seating Matters factory and how the Lean process had been successfully implemented. On the trip, something seemed to click with them. They became really engaged with all the ideas and seemed on board with the idea. Finally, I had arrived somewhere in the way of convincing my staff that this was the way to go.

When we got back to the UK, I re-introduced the morning meetings. While facing the same blank stares as before, I had an idea. I would have each employee experience the hosting duties and set a standard for how the meeting should flow, breaking it down into small sections. It seemed to be successful. Previous quiet employees were now speaking out, highlighting problems, and explaining and sharing improvements they had each made. The communication was better than ever; I was building a real community at work and improvements were being made daily. Questions were being raised on the quality of products. If they had defects for instance, and real respect for the product and the end consumer was becoming apparent. It was rolling along better than ever before, but I was still not 100% happy with what we had achieved, and some people were showing a lot less engagement than others.

Ryan from Seating Matters had previously asked me if I was planning on going to the Global Lean Leadership Summit in California, I had declined. 2 days before the summit, Paul got in touch and said I needed to go to it, he thankfully managed to secure me a place and I was on the plane to LAX the next day for the big meet. I made it to the registration evening just in time and there were over 200 people there. I only recognized a few people so I awkwardly stood on my own and tried to mingle with

a few people. Purely by chance, a few people from FastCap that I recognized from their Lean videos showed up and stood right next to me. It was nice talking to them, I gained so much insight from them and a few others I had been speaking with. Paul then showed up, it was starting to feel like the universe was just really wanting to help me. We went and got dinner with a few others and met Ryan who exclaimed, “I didn’t know you’d be here” to which I responded, “Nor did I” with a laugh. I picked up so much information that night and at the meeting the following morning. Once again, I got lucky. I was seated at a table with Paul and the FastCap gang. They enlightened me on even more Lean topics and the speakers introduced me to the Lean community around the world.

Despite the numerous setbacks I had encountered, I still pushed forward with implementing Lean at my business. I encouraged more training, identified wastes, and made continuous improvements. I would constantly try to make improvements more engaging and fun, encouraging people to set their own standards. I built an “Improvement Counter Board” which simply meant a staff member would receive a small token for every improvement, and we would aim to fill the board as quickly as possible. There were standards everywhere. All the staff seemed to have newfound energy like I had after my first trip to Japan. The quality of the business was improving, so were the products, so were the processes. There seemed to be a greater level of respect than ever before, and people were keen to enforce standards to ensure all employees were doing the right thing.

This continued for a solid 5 months until COVID-19 struck. At first, I was unsure what would happen. We were in a comfortable position to suspend all production and work purely on improvements and cleaning for the duration. An influx of orders changed all that. At our peak, we were receiving 6 times the number of orders we normally received, and with 90% of our products being manufactured onsite, this would prove a logistical problem. We extended working hours and began working 7 days a week. Our standards, unfortunately, began to slip though, with the new demand, we had less time for the morning meetings, less

time for cleaning, less time for setting new standards. Our time had to be spent manufacturing and packing. We would finish some weeks with over 1,000 orders that we simply could not ship. We were struggling to handle the demand. Lean had to take a step to the side, much to my dismay.

5 months later, once the influx of orders had died down, and normalcy began to set back in, we found the time to start on Lean again. But by this point, Lean had almost been forgotten. I messaged Ryan again and basically asked him, “What the hell do I do?” We hit a reset button. We had new staff, new ideas, and now we had time to put all that to good use and invest in Lean methodologies once again. We started over but still had all the existing Lean improvements we had to re-introduce. The Coronavirus situation, in many ways, helped us learn about the massive gaps we had in areas and forced our hands to make improvements. The morning meetings returned and we re-introduced a period each morning for 3S-ing. The improvements began to flow back in, we got back to manufacturing new products, and continued to work to eliminate the 8 wastes. We even eliminated the unofficial “9th Waste” bad communication.

<p><b>1 OVER PRODUCTION</b></p>  <p>Waste from making more products than are needed.</p> <p><b>EXAMPLE</b> Add a specific example for your company in this box here.</p>	<p><b>2 TRANSPORT</b></p>  <p>Wasted time and effort moving products or materials.</p> <p><b>EXAMPLE</b> Add a specific example for your company in this box here.</p>	<p><b>3 EXCESS INVENTORY</b></p>  <p>Waste from excess products and materials that are not being used or processed.</p> <p><b>EXAMPLE</b> Add a specific example for your company in this box here.</p>	<p><b>4 DEFECTS</b></p>  <p>Wasted effort from re-working mistakes, scrapping products and incorrect information.</p> <p><b>EXAMPLE</b> Add a specific example for your company in this box here.</p>	<p><b>9 UNOFFICIAL COMMUNICATION</b></p>  <p>Not explaining things in detail or providing proper training.</p> <p><b>EXAMPLE</b> Add a specific example for your company in this box here.</p>
<p><b>5 EXCESS MOTION</b></p>  <p>Waste from unnecessary movements and actions from people.</p> <p><b>EXAMPLE</b> Add a specific example for your company in this box here.</p>	<p><b>6 OVER PROCESSING</b></p>  <p>Spending more time or effort on something than what is required.</p> <p><b>EXAMPLE</b> Add a specific example for your company in this box here.</p>	<p><b>7 WAITING</b></p>  <p>Waste from time involved in waiting for the next step in a process</p> <p><b>EXAMPLE</b> Add a specific example for your company in this box here.</p>	<p><b>8 UNUSED GENIUS</b></p>  <p>Underusing people's skills, talents and knowledge.</p> <p><b>EXAMPLE</b> Add a specific example for your company in this box here.</p>	

My best advice for the journey would be – never give up – it's called continuous improvement for a reason. Never stop making improvements on your journey. There is no end. I had so many setbacks and could have truly given up at any time, but I continued through the problems, making improvements to achieve the goals I wanted. Even when it looked like Lean was a million miles away, I stuck at it, and I am still a very long way to go on my journey.



# ARIZONA

**JASON SCHROEDER**

**ELEVATE CONSTRUCTION IST LLC • OWNER • CONSTRUCTION**

---

My idea of heaven is a place where we experience everything improving. For me, it cannot be a place where we have everything, know everything, and it is all given to us—that would be my personal hell. I think we would stagnate, lose interest, get bored, and become depressed. I don't think we were built for that kind of life. In the movie, *The Matrix*, we all remember the character Agent Smith explaining why their attempt to create a perfectly programmed existence failed by saying, "Human beings define their reality through misery and suffering. A perfect world was a dream that [their] primitive cerebrum kept trying to wake up from." That little movie quote reinforced my belief, but through Lean, I realized why the "perfect world," wouldn't work. It wasn't because we define our reality through misery and suffering, it is because we define our existence through progress and hope. When we look forward to things, work for things, use our minds, and strive for a higher goal, we can truly be happy. Without that looking forward, without that progress, and without that higher goal, the meaning is lost, and life becomes meaningless and boring. So my vision of heaven is a place where we experience improvement. A place where we look forward to things, and where we are still striving for better and loftier goals. It won't be a place where we do nothing and have everything given to us—it will be a place where we give, work, and improve eternally. Lean provides that on earth. Not only does it provide such a lofty goal. It is a tremendous challenge. If you don't believe me, just think about FastCap and achieving that level of excellence. But Paul's books bring Lean into the realm of possibilities. This is my story of *2 Second Lean* impact.

I have been in commercial construction for 22 years and am a business owner and Field Operations Director for a large general contractor. My Lean journey began over 8 years ago when I was given the book, *2 Second Lean*. I read the book, enjoyed it, and participated with a team where we began morning huddles every day with the foremen on site. It was a nice change, but I did not know the magnitude of what was about to happen. Our coordination was better, our schedules



easier to manage, and our safety improved--not because of any tools we were using, but because we became a united and cohesive team dedicated to solving a problem, and we didn't even realize it at first. On that first project where we implemented *2 Second Lean*, we won a safety excellence award from ENR, the project finished on time, on budget, and with excellence in quality.



That project is still notorious as one of the best teams and projects in our area. I remember one key point in our journey where we were experiencing a lack of safety focus, uncleanliness, and disorganization. The normal response in construction would have been to let it be, to just give out token effort, try our best, ask for change, and see what happens. But, as I said before, our team had changed. We were solving problems now. Instead of doing the norm, we gathered all 210 workers in a morning



all 210 workers in a morning

huddle and made a deal. This is how we said it from the porch on the trailers that morning: “We respect all of you and want a healthy environment out



there. So, this is the deal we want to make. Starting tomorrow, we will build bathrooms inside the building on levels 1 and 3. They will be stocked well, with running water, and all the things a nice bathroom would have. We are making a nice lunch area for you and will continue to take care of all your needs. In return, we want a perfectly clean project. We want perfectly clean bathrooms, and we want you to be 100% on top of safety. Does anyone not agree to this deal?”

That morning everything changed. The morale improved, cleanliness became remarkable, and everyone began toeing the line on safety. The bathrooms were so nicely built, we even had Lean visual management for how to change out a toilet paper roll, and clean the toilet, or change out the paper towels if more supplies were needed. They had such an impact, we received daily



feedback of appreciation. One foreman said, “In 40 years of construction I have never seen anything like this. It is nice to finally see a project team treating us like human beings, and not like animals.” That was just the beginning.



From there, I was assigned to a project in Tucson. On that project, we would have over 380 workers at the peak. On the way from Phoenix to Tucson, I listened to the book 2 *Second Lean* again three times.



I was beginning to really get it and see how much farther we could take this culture of Lean. So, in the preconstruction phase of this large



laboratory project, we set up all the systems we wanted to use. We wrote the key behaviors we wanted, and the processes we would use into everyone's work authorizations and contracts. We designed a system and culture that would pay for what we wanted, win over the workforce, create an environment of incentive and survival, maintain cleanliness and organization, sustain our systems, and create a remarkable

culture and team. It worked.

The Vice President of Construction said walking onto the project was like "going to Disneyland." We toured people through the project almost weekly, presented at LCI Congress, and we're constantly asked to share what we were doing. We had created a culture.

To name a few of the things we did on that project to make it remarkable, I will tell you about our huddles, bathrooms, lunch area, our hoist, and the 165 Lean videos we produced. To begin,



let's talk about the bathrooms. In setting up the project we knew we wanted the best bathrooms for our workers. When pricing out trailers for the office, we found a deal to get an 8-wide trailer for the price of a 5-wide, which is what we needed. We

renovated the 3-wide portion of the trailer to be half bathroom and half lunchroom. The bathroom had 8 stalls, 6 urinals, and 3 sinks. Walls were painted white, complete with Lean visual management, and each stall had a nice toilet, toilet brush, plunger, and extra supplies.

In 24 months, we only had 1 piece of graffiti, and although I have helped unplug the toilet many times during that project, they were a huge success, and the reason our culture worked. On the wall, we had a sign that said, “You, the skilled craft, are the most important resource on this project. These bathrooms are for you. Please leave it better than you found it and do one thing to keep it clean every time.” And they did.

They worked so well, we added music, Chuck Norris jokes on the wall, shelving, extra supplies, hangers-on doors, and many other Lean improvements. The lunch area had a fridge stocked with drinks, microwaves, utensils, storage for lunchboxes, and a foosball table. They loved it. We would even buy chips and salsa with our scrap metal budget and the team responded with good morale and great behavior. It was magical.

On that project, we huddled every worker at the entry for 5



to 10 minutes every day. We discussed safety, taught about Lean, asked for feedback, answered questions, and inspired the women and men on the project. This is one of the single-most value-add improvements I have made in my entire career. It galvanized us together and, as I would later learn by reading, *The Culture Code*, created a social group that was accountable to each other. Daily we would teach, encourage, correct, and explain why we did what we did on that project. When someone would complain about a

delivery being turned away at the hoist when it wasn't scheduled, we would explain that variation like that is actually stealing. I would hold up my wallet and say, "Would anyone come and take my cash out of my wallet?" "No!" "Why not?" "Because it would be unethical!" So, I proposed, "What is different between stealing my cash and receiving an unscheduled delivery when it wastes the time of another contractor and steals their money in man-



hours?" Those kinds of explanations were game-changing because we began to see as a group, know as a group, and act as a group. We had a culture.

When that project was finished, we had 165 Lean videos cataloging our Lean Journey and many of the improvements the workers made in the field. The results were the best part. I would bet any amount of money that we were the safest, cleanest, and most organized project in Arizona with the best culture, and we were told so consistently.

I haven't even told you about the best thing. The best thing is the progress we made as a team. By having operational control, safety, cleanliness, and a healthy culture, we were able to see what we needed to see fix problems and bring forward solutions that made working there fun. The culture, the bathrooms, the huddles, and our Lean journey became the basis of everything else we did.

## **TO ONLY LIST A FEW, WE HAD:**

- Model checks for the design model.
- Remarkable constructability reviews for all design.
- Early trade partner participation and coordination.
- UG prefabrication for all MEP in the basement.
- Prefabrication of all overhead in spools by room.
  
- Room kitting for every wall in every room. We brought out pre-

- cut parts and assembled them in place which was faster and safer.
- Misters at the hoist to keep people cool.
  - A beautifully maintained office with decorations.
  - Effective conference rooms.
  - Visual management.
  - A family picture wall.
  - A planning area.
  - The implementation of Takt planning to create flow on the project.
  - Visual management for worker training on hard hats.
  - Lean visual boards on every floor.
  - Roadblock maps on Bluebeam.
  - A health kitchen with stocked supplies.
  - Monthly craft events with games, food, and feedback surveys.
  - Custom-built Lean desks.
  - Delivery software to manage our materials.
  - We even had a masseuse visit the project.
  - And much, much, more

I could go on and on about the other things we were able to do because we had the capacity now to continuously improve. I am convinced there is no better way to scale excellence than the way Paul explains the “3 Pillars of Lean” in his book. Learn the “8 Deadly Sins of Waste”, take daily steps to improve what bugs you, and shoot before and after videos of the improvements. To do this we printed 8 waste and 5S cards for all workers, taught them to hate waste, and contracted their



companies to give them 25 minutes every morning in a crew preparation hurdle to 5S, teach Lean, prepare the day, and fill out their safety Pre-Task Plans. It is a powerful thing to go from 12 people managing a one-hundred-million-dollar project to 390

people managing it and heading in the same direction.

This is the impact of 2 *Second Lean*. I continue to scale this culture now to many other projects. I have seen project teams change their results in a matter of a week using these methods. My next goal is to scale this to the entire nation and the world of construction so we respect every worker, train every leader, and preserve our lives and our families. I want to live in heaven on earth.

# CALIFORNIA



## JOHN YAMAT

### VARIAN MEDICAL SYSTEM • PRODUCTION MANAGER



I love Lean - I left the GLLS 2019 angry. This might not be what people want to hear about. Allow me to preface my story. I am a production manager. The highest level of control within our factory is 3 levels up. Our CEO is 3 levels beyond that. Our company is a little over 10k & factories across world. I, a lone production manager desiring change, realized that I'd have none of the opportunity that the majority of succeeding speakers had. At best, I was 3 levels lower in the matrix to

ask for change throughout a factory. At worst, I was 6 levels lower to ask change throughout the company. Here's the good, the bad, and the rest of my story.

The good. *2 Second Lean* inspired me to make change throughout the factory. Within my own group, I started running daily meetings and asked others to join. I wrote the 3 pillars of lean on my wall to try to use them with my groups. After the 2019 GLLS, I was energized by the amazing community and the impact I could make within my company. There were

#### One Improvement (Example) – JMY

- Cable organization
- 5S example: Performed 5S - set
- 8 Wastes example: Reduced waste – motion
- Kaizen example: using headphones easier



varian



fantastic stories of the positives one could make while leading the Lean Culture within a company. I couldn't wait to fix the things that bugged me.



Now, for the bad. Although I ran meetings and tried engaging my peers – I was simply that. A peer. Several groups I put together failed because there wasn't enough structure. It also didn't help that I couldn't continuously ask for all the resources I asked for. Production demand often took the resources I was trying to gather so we could improve our production overall. It was a vicious cycle. As a sole production manager, rarely were all groups onboard at once. "Why should I do it, if they don't?" More often than not, I found myself drained and upset with where I was in my Lean Journey.

However, the rest doesn't end there. Currently, I lead a group of 10 Continuous Improvement leaders across 10 sites around the world. The first part of my tenure as this group's leader was to get our Lean Journey started on a global scale. Working with our training admins, I got the basics of Lean training set up. 5S, 7 Deadly wastes, and Kaizen courses are being delivered to 800+ employees within the company. In 2018 we led an entire factory reset. Huge sorting phase with crates of excess material removed from the factory. All of this wouldn't have happened if it weren't for my role leading the Lean Culture.



Where does that leave us? We are all in our own places on our own Lean Journeys. What matters is that we stick ourselves in the journey with

intent to get better every day. This is the result of 2 Second Lean in my journey. The good, the bad, and the rest. Overall, I was inspired, beaten down, and continued forward anyway. I want other people to know that success is in the process. 2 Second Lean is one process you can use. However, nobody wants to do what Toyota does. People want to do what their company does – together. The key is influencing the right people, setting up a good system, and never giving up. Steve Jobs said it best, “...the people crazy enough to believe they can change the world, are the ones that do.”



# WASHINGTON

## LUKAS HOLLAND

**FASTCAP • PRODUCTION ENGINEER • LEAN PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

---

I'm a Production Engineer at FastCap and Lean “apprentice” to Paul Akers and *2 Second Lean*. As a child, I loved playing hard and breaking things. I would take them apart, find what was done wrong in the design or manufacture, and always think to myself, “why wasn’t someone thinking that would break?” I knew from a young age that I had a calling to engineering and wanted to make better quality products. I always had an inkling for math and a strong focus in my daily life on efficiency. I hated boredom and hated wasting time. Still to this day, it is one of my favorite outlooks on daily life...and why I strongly encourage taking a Lean way of thinking home with you and allowing it to influence everything you do. It is Taiichi Ohno’s 8th precept: “Valueless motions are equal to shortening one’s life.” It is how I have always felt, but this precept puts it simply, clearly, and powerfully. It wasn’t until I started college and decided to pursue my degree in manufacturing engineering, that I was first introduced to the concept of Lean at Western Washington University (WWU) in Bellingham, WA.



I learned quickly that a degree in Manufacturing Engineering is basically a degree in Lean manufacturing. It is, at the collegiate level, celebrated as the best standard practice for manufacturing and taught accordingly.

Yes, I took classes in the strength of materials, machining, statics, fluid dynamics, and CAD, etc. But half of my classes were Lean focused--design for assembly, design for manufacture, six sigma, robotics for Lean work cells, ergo work cell design and analysis in CAD, etc. I had to read books such as *The Toyota Way* and *The Machine that Changed the World*. This is also when I was first introduced to *2 Second Lean*, as a senior-level textbook in a college class!

When I first read *2 Second Lean*, as a college senior immersed in “high level” Lean books, and not sure what my career would entail, I wasn’t sure what I thought of it. I’ll be honest, it first struck me as somewhat basic. I was pretty sure that Lean manufacturing meant sitting in an office on a computer running charts, analyzing if a specific process was under control, and why or why not. Spending days drawing value stream maps to improve overall flow and make a process more profitable. Analyzing sales numbers and manufacturing time to better achieve Heijunka. Charting process times to identify bottlenecks and decrease Takt time. Probably some writing up of plan-do-check-act plans for a project management leader to sign off on. *2 Second Lean* didn’t talk about any of the tools I was being taught.

What I know now is I just totally and completely DID NOT GET IT! As a college kid, I had not yet been hit in the face with the reality of life. Again, Taiichi Ohno says it best in Precept 1: “You are a cost. First, reduce waste.” But it was about the same week I finished reading *2 Second Lean* that I finally got that first eye-opening slap. I had a class requirement to find a local company and do a project for them. I was to choose one of their processes and value stream map it and write a report on how the value stream map could be tweaked to increase efficiency and profits. Now I finally got to put all these Lean tools to use in the real world. I went to a local company (which I won't name) and spent probably close to 40 hours analyzing their process, mapping it, and drawing out improvements. At the end of all that work, I realized I had not come up with much that was implementable, or would save them much time or money! This was the catalyst to the paradox change-I needed to understand the real world. It left me thinking what a

HUGE waste of time and energy this stupid tool was!

A few weeks later, the class that had me read *2 Second Lean* took us on a field trip to FastCap to see what a real Lean manufacturing company looked like and how they operated. I was absolutely blown away. The company I had just done the project for called themselves a “Lean manufacturer” as well, but what a difference, not only to the company I had just done the project for but also to any company I had ever worked at! Here were a bunch of people standing in a morning meeting together who seemed like they WANTED to be at work! WHAT? Unheard of! They were having fun discussing little problems and solutions, talking about what they found when they tried timing different ways to do something the day before, and why they thought different ways were better or worse. On top of that, the contrast in cleanliness and organization...well it just made me happy to be there! It looked like no place I had ever seen! Clearly, this guy Paul was on to something, but I still didn't quite get what it was. I just knew I liked the result!

When I graduated school, I started work at FastCap for Paul and was immediately immersed in this culture of *2 Second Lean*. This is when my viewpoint started to change and I started to get it! I began to understand that while all the tools I learned in school could be useful when used at the right time, they were not an important underlying principle of Lean. Toyota understands this, and any successful Lean company does too. It's not about what they can teach you in school and it is not about trying to copy the processes of a successful Lean company. None of this will make you successful. It's about the PEOPLE. The “One Big Thing” from Chapter 6 hits the nail on the head: “At its core, Lean is really about the process of growing people.”

My transformation was not immediate, it took some time to understand the importance of the culture. At first, I was put in charge of the “Best Fence” build cell. There were lots of things I learned in school that I quickly wanted to implement. I started by standardizing things, making sure there was a place for everything and everything in its place. I started making process improvements, building jigs, timing different ways to do processes, and cutting

down on build times, etc. I felt pretty good about myself. I was using what I learned in school to implement improvements and my improvements worked! I made the process much easier, much more efficient, and made the building cell tidy and organized and easy and fun. This was great exposure to being part of a good Lean culture! You get time to make improvements and have fun doing it. People around you and leaders celebrate your improvements, Having just finished learning all the detailed tools of Lean in school, I quickly came to agree with the one big thing from Chapter 7: “Smart people can’t believe it can be this simple!” I even liked to joke that, “Lean is just the smart person's version of being lazy!” You just make the process so easy you don’t have to work hard anymore!

I have worked my way up through the company, first earning a title as a Lead Production Engineer, and these days overseeing operations around the entire facility. As I have worked my way into a leadership role, I have had many eye-opening experiences that have really transformed my understanding of Lean, and how and why it is REALLY all about the culture and the people. Without a culture, with EVERYONE on board and involved, a company will never be able to compete, no matter how much money, tools, resources, engineers, etc. they throw at “being Lean”. I see it over and over again in companies I tour. Companies say, “This is our continuous improvement team of 5 people.” Or companies who say, “Here is our Lean office full of desks and whiteboards, set away from the shop floor so we can focus on what to improve.” None of it works. A successful Lean culture has leaders on the shop floor working with the people and growing the people. It has leaders leading everyone on the team to experience the same successes and pride that I felt in the “Best Fence” build cell when I first started.

When I first started leading, I got the opportunity to have Paul as my mentor. He was there to guide me when I get stuck or didn’t know how to deal with an issue. He was there to teach me how a Lean culture should work. Most importantly he was there to lead me in the same way I have learned to lead. Never upset about a mistake, just always wanting to make progress. No matter

what I did wrong, as long as I understood why I did it wrong, and how and why I would improve in the future, he did not get mad. He actually was happy I made the mistake because I got to learn and improve. He was way over the top with praise about even the smallest improvement! Even things where I felt like wow I should have figured that out a year ago, he would use words like “genius” and say things like, “wow, you did that so much better than I would have!” But he also taught me tough love. To put it in his words leadership is 90% nice guy, and a nice guy should be overly nice but, the other 10% is serious, and it needs to be serious. I have learned a lot from having him as my mentor, as he had Bob Taylor as his mentor. I love that every day I get the opportunity to learn more from him!

At first, I was much like Paul, when he first started at FastCap. Please note at the end of Chapter 7: “I had a strong tendency to blame the employees instead of realizing most of the problems stemmed from ineffective leadership, poor processes, and bad training.” But Paul has helped me to realize that I just need to focus on my ineffective training and leadership style! This has instilled in me a great level of humility! I wish I could quit quoting *2 Second Lean*, but Chapter 13, “The One Thing:” “Humility is the path to greatness” is so true. By focusing on what I could do better, and always seeing anyone’s shortcomings as my fault, I have found myself much better equipped to lead others to greatness!

I will end with one anecdote about my journey with one particular employee. When he came to us, he was what many might view as a “problem employee.” He was young, easily distracted, and not engaged in work, on top of being slow, often lethargic, not sleeping enough, complaining of headaches constantly, sometimes even taking so long to spit out an idea that it was hard to even listen to him. He was making TONS of mistakes, multiple defects daily, and carrying on so many conversations that he was even causing good employees to make mistakes. He was the kind of person many people would view as cancer to the organization, and get rid of quickly. But we have learned from Toyota, that it is all about training and building a culture. Now I’ll be honest, we had to give this employee some pretty tough love at points in his

transformation. Even culminating in having to, after limiting the tasks he could do and who he could work with, send him home without pay for an entire week, and tell him to go drive around and think about where else he'd like to work. But that's all part of that other 10%. The other 90% is what has really turned this employee around. Remembering all the lessons I learned from Paul, I focused on helping him in every way I could. Remember at Toyota, they almost never fire anyone. In fact, a top engineer there told me on my trip to Japan that an employee will work their way all the way down to night shift janitor, still at the same company, still with an ability to move back up, before he gets fired. It started with having him help me with my improvements and challenging him more and more to be a problem solver. Even if I already knew how I would do it, not telling him, letting him figure it out, and doing it with him his way. Even if I knew my way would be better because the goal is to get people to take pride in their work and want to be problem solvers. Remember, improvement is continuous! So even if I knew a better way to do it, I knew that he would find things he didn't like about his solution and I could help him improve it even further. But, then HE could take the pride in having figured it out himself! Slowly, step by step over the past 3 years he has improved to become one of the best employees at FastCap! He now makes more improvements than anyone else! He has learned to assemble incredible improvements. In the last year, he has even started learning to be a leader himself and help train people and help others with their improvements! His life has improved dramatically along with his work. He is happier & more energetic, even making more progress with the ladies. When he comes to work, he is happy to be here. *2 Second Lean* is a culture of growing people. Just as Paul grew and taught me, I have grown and taught him!

If we can put the time in, and get results like this from every employee, imagine the company we will have! Now he gets to help grow even more people and pass Paul's training and vision on more and more. As I lead people, he is always there to help people out when I am busy. Every time I sit in the morning meeting and hear that someone is grateful for his help, it gives me a sense of

pride in what he has become. This is a much greater pride than I could have imagined feeling back when I was proud of myself for all my improvements on the “Best Fence” build cell! So while I am still fanatical about improvements – I make at LEAST 3 a day – what I have really gained from 2 *Second Lean* is an understanding that people can grow, and that growing everyone in the company is what makes the difference between that first company I did a project for in school who thought they were Lean, and FastCap. Now more than making things better myself, I get my pride and joy from watching everyone else improve everything constantly because of my leadership and guidance! My time spent growing them pays back 10 fold with how many more improvements they can accomplish together, and how much happiness and engagement I see out of them as a result of their ability to make a change, make the company better, and take pride in it!

Lastly, I will say that 2 *Second Lean* has changed my everyday life. Not just that I have made my home life more efficient with improvements--anyone can do that! It has taught me patience, understanding, and the value of working WITH people and not blaming them. Everyone around me has benefited – my wife, my parents, even my dogs!!! Through that knowledge, I have become happier, and even more motivated in my personal life!



# WASHINGTON



## LYLE HUGHS

**FASTCAP • PROCESS ENGINEER • LEAN PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

---

Hello, my name is Lyle Hughs. I am 25-years-old and I have been working at FastCap for Paul Akers for 5 years. When I started working at FastCap on September 1st, 2015, I did not know what to expect or what I would learn. Before FastCap I knew nothing of *2 Second Lean*, Kaizen, or even who Paul Akers was. All I knew was how to work hard, how to have fun, how to talk, and to not give up even when the going gets tough.

Now before FastCap I was and still am a soccer referee and have been for 13 years. Right after high school though I was working at a local warehouse in Ferndale as a warehouse clerk. I was a jack of all trades there and was cross-trained in every position whether it was picking, receiving inventory, or even janitorial duties. During the summer that company let me take time off to work at a Summer Bible Camp as a counselor. The last week at camp, I got a text from my supervisor that said to call. When I called, He said, “man we were excited and had big things planned for you when you got back, but out of nowhere the boss has fired you and we don’t know why.” Listening to that was hard and I did not know how to respond. I was grateful that I was at camp, so my mind was distracted with working with the kids, and being surrounded by a great support system. So, I entered that next week with no job when I got home and learned a lot.

Now you may be wondering, “I thought this was supposed to be about the effect of Lean in your life, not a sob story of your life?” You would be correct. I wanted to tell you this story, not for you to feel sorry for me, but it leads into the culture that Lean creates and how it affected a guy that knew nothing of Lean or even

of FastCap. Something I did not know during my time at camp was I was working with Paul Akers' niece. She knew of my situation and she mentioned something to her cousin, who also knew me, and was working at FastCap. During that week I got a text that said: "Hey, heard what happened and we just had 2 people leave and I think you would be a great fit. You should come in with your resume. I brought in my resume, talked with Leanne Akers, and then was asked to come in to do a test day...and the rest is history. I really appreciate the Lean culture and it's teamwork mentality. Everyone's thoughts are appreciated and heard. Whether it's on improvements or processes or even on people that might fit into the "FastCap Family," in my case.

On my first day at FastCap I knew something was different. I had never been to a workplace where we didn't start work right when we got there. When I first got there for my test day, I got assigned to clean the bathroom, then after that, I got to witness a meeting at FastCap. I had never been to a place that focused so much on investment into quality, whether it was its employees, the warehouse, or the equipment that was being used. I knew it was different but did not fully understand all the different things that went on.

When I am asked when I started my Lean journey, I like to say, "Well I worked at FastCap for 2 years and then I had a wake-up call and actually started practicing *2 Second Lean*." Now you may be scratching your head and say, "I thought you said you have been working at FastCap for 5 years?" and the answer is yes. Yes, I have been working at FastCap for 5 years, but I did not fully understand Lean until 3 years ago. My first 2 years of FastCap were "great" in my eyes... well that was the case until the year 2017 hit. I did the chores, I made improvements (because it was required), I participated in the meetings, I knew the Lean principles and could answer them, I did my work and the list could go on and on. At points, I would wonder why I was not moving forward in the company or why I was not getting raises for the work I did. I would just shrug it off and move on to the next thing.

Looking back at those first 2 years, the thing that was lacking was my full engagement into what Lean is and how it can affect

the way I work and my personal life. I made Lean a thing I did and not a way of thinking or a lifestyle.

I mentioned the year 2017 earlier and this was the year when things started to click. It was a hard year, but also was a year of growth. To give some context around this time, Paul gave us the challenge to have perfect work and to fix the mistakes that were happening inside the company. Especially he didn't want any of our mistakes to get outside of the company to our customers. Everyone was held to a high standard of the work they were producing. Processes were getting established, clarified, and fixed. Now comes the moment when I had the "wake up call." During this time I had a lot of hard life circumstances hit, whether it was being engaged and then having it called off, to my grandfather dying unexpectedly and tragically, or even physically with breaking my collarbone and having kidney stones. Life was extremely hard and in a PG version, "crap had hit the fan." I was so bogged down and I brought all this crap with me to work. When I worked, I was not focused on the process at all, I was focused on the hardships and everything going on around me. I did the work but was not focused on work at all. To mask the pain I would talk, which also distracted me from delivering perfect work to the next spot. The leadership team noticed.

This is why looking back I am grateful for high standards and keeping the rope tight. At many points throughout that year, I had been talked to about my work that I was producing, all the chatting I was doing, all the mistakes I was making, and that I was not following the processes. Being called into the conference room was not something I looked forward to and there was even a time I was sent home for a day to think of how I could improve at work. Each time I went in it was the same excuse, "I'm sorry I don't know how that happened and I'm trying." My commitment level to FastCap was not there. In my mind, it was a place I worked at and had so many other things I was doing whether it was refereeing, online school, ministry and the list could go on. Now there was a call into the conference room that was the turning point. Paul was there with Leanne, Lukas, Brady, and Alisha (the leadership team who had been working with me). What Paul said next was when

the wake-up call occurred. He looked at me and said, “Lyle we love your personality and the energy you bring to the FastCap team. But the attention to detail, the quality is not there. Lyle we see your potential, but we can’t stand by with all these mistakes and see no improvement. We are going to send you home for a week without pay and basically, it’s your last chance. When you come back, we want you to succeed and we are here to help.” For 2017 that was already sucking, it got a lot worse. I will even admit to you, I left the conference room crying. It was a hard conversation to have and I appreciate that Paul and the leadership team did that.

That week away from work was when I had to ask myself why do I want to work at FastCap? The answer did not come right away, and my Dad did something that I appreciate. I called him after I was sent home and told him what was going on. He told me, “Lyle you have a good job at FastCap and it’s different and you need to figure out how to make it work.”

He also told me, “you are not staying home during the week” and if talking was my problem, I should go try tree service sales for a week with a family friend. So, I did. I went and knocked on over 100 doors trying to sell tree service and talked my heart’s desire and much more. My pay was based on the commission of jobs I was able to get. I made...zero bucks that week. I then realized that talking all the time and trying to sell something was not my jam.

When I came back to FastCap, I had a new appreciation for the work I was doing. I had a higher respect for Paul and Leanne Akers and did not want to let them down with how much they had given me and worked with me. I also realized that the people around me wanted to help me grow as a person and as a worker and that I wasn’t alone in this growth to become a deeper thinker.

Things did not change instantly when I got back to work. It took time. There was still a struggle. 4 months into being back I broke my collarbone, which was a blessing in disguise. I was out of work for 4 weeks and even though I was in pain. I was happy to be at work. Due to my broken collarbone, my responsibilities got shifted around and instead of picking orders and shipping, I switched over to production. I found that I loved building things and loved tinkering with the way I did things to make it better. This

switch to production allowed me to thrive and it wasn't anything special I did. The leadership team was putting me in a spot where I could succeed instead of struggle. When I was working on improving how I worked, I noticed the leadership team was always available to me. I was able to ask questions and input about ways I could improve. So, I did. I checked in with them on things I was doing well and ways I could improve for the next week and I still do that. I'm not perfect and constantly need a reminder of ways I can improve. It was a slow process, but during that time I started seeing Lean come to life in me. It impacted me and the way that I worked and it started to seep into so many things.

The first 2 years of FastCap, I just came to work. What I learned through 2 *Second Lean* is it's not just about work, it's about "growing the person." It's about shaping the employee so that they are actually using their brain, problem-solving, and figuring out ways to make life and work easier. It's about using problem-solvers to make standards and processes that are easy, so people are not struggling and being efficient. For me, It started with working on improving traits, habits, and working on being humble in myself first. Which in turn allowed me to focus on following the process and delivering perfect work. A lot of the credit goes to the leadership team (Lukas, Alisha, Paul, and Leanne) for keeping people, especially me accountable, for holding the rope tight, and for being available to discuss ways to improve. One of the ways I improved was focusing on the things that bugged me. Whether it was a process, or a personality trait, or a jig/station, I looked for ways to constantly improve. There were so many things around that bugged me and I saw how, when I started with those things, it changed the way I thought about how I did processes and how I did things in general.

I really saw Lean shaping the way I thought not just at work but with how I was running a youth group at my church and assigning soccer referees. Not having standards and processes bugged me. I started with me, then I started looking at the way I did things and started improving my processes. I started making templates that made inputting soccer games easier. For the Youth Group I made email group chats that made it simple for me to get

the word out, so I was not struggling for 10-20 minutes to send out 10 individual messages. *2 Second Lean* seeped over into my life. Many times, when you say why *2 Second Lean* is so effective, the generic answer is because it is achievable and attainable. For me *2 Second Lean* challenged the way I thought. It allowed me to focus and be present with the task that I was doing. I was able to think, “Ok is there something that bugs me about this build?” If so, “How do I Improve it?”

There’s a principle that Paul has in his book and one that stands out to me and my journey with Lean and FastCap. Paul uses a phrase from Bob Taylor which says, “When you are responsible for more things, you become responsible for more people.” We simplify it to “more things, more people.” I saw this come true when I embraced Lean. When I was responsible for myself and the projects I was doing, more responsibilities came my way. It started with all the harder builds, then it went into fixing returns. As I was responsible for these things, I saw the responsibility for more people when I got to train others on the hard processes. The leadership saw a quality of patience and that I was good at communicating processes and wanted to use those traits in me to help the team. As you take responsibility for the things around you, the realm that you influence expands. If this sounds prideful, it’s not supposed to. There are so many people that have influenced me and have grown me into the person I am today. One thing I do know is I am not perfect and I still have a lot to improve. But when you are responsible for the things around you, a lot of possibilities can arise. I see this daily, whether it is with me being trusted to train new people, or getting to work with people with disabilities that work at FastCap to make things easier for them, or even being able to go to Japan with Paul for a study trip of Lean. The biggest thing is to stay humble, find things that bug you and fix it, and to want to learn and grow.

If I could leave you with anything about the effect of *2 Second Lean*, I would say it is not about what you do, but that you are embracing a different way of thinking. When I actually embraced Lean and challenged the way I thought, I saw a guy who was sent home for a week and talked a lot, grow into a person who

is now utilizing skills, making a ton of improvements, training people, being a part of the leadership, and was sent to Japan in 2019 on a Japan Study Trip. In 2017 I could have not seen myself where I am at today. So, you could say *2 Second Lean* has been very impactful on this 25-year-old guy.



# MISSOURI

## MARC BRAUN

**CAMBRIDGE AIR SOLUTION • PRESIDENT • HVAC MANUFACTURING**

---

Impact! I can claim with 100% confidence that reading 2 *Second Lean* AND committing to following the simple principles outlined starting in late 2014 has had a massive impact on my life, on my leadership, and on the 160 families inside of Cambridge Air Solutions. It has also allowed this team to impact thousands and thousands of people who have come to visit Cambridge Air Solutions (formerly Cambridge Engineering) since that date.

Paul Akers has an extremely unique ability to simplify the most complex concepts into something understandable at any level of education and at any level in the organization. Most people choose to believe that Lean can't be that simple while Paul teaches that it has to be that simple.

A few key team members meet on a daily basis and reading 2 *Second Lean* together, started a slow build of momentum which built into an engaged culture. The purpose espoused by Paul behind Lean, “to grow people”, was the key. With that clearly leading the way, I watched as employees courageously stepped out of their comfort zone and made improvement after improvement. Our CEO, John Kramer, was just crazy enough to allow experimentation across all areas of the business starting in operations and extending to sales and marketing and into finance and accounting. The funniest comments would come back from tour participants after seeing the amazing engagement and hearing about the results. They would say, “It looks like you are doing exactly what Paul is talking about in his book.” That was the goal. For everyone to read the book and start improving everything around them.

Today we have doubled in size, have strong profitability, and a positive culture aligned with growth. We've used the same skills to navigate a global pandemic without losing a single employee and our employees are ready to go out and tackle the world.

As part of our attempt to give back to a global community and enrich lives, we provide virtual tours of our factory to help encourage others on this journey. We would welcome any manufacturing leaders to join us and we'd love to come to see your progress as well. We are a founding anchor company in The Association for Manufacturing Excellence (AME). It is a St. Louis based consortium with 15 other companies striving for continuous improvement cultures and many of which have started following the 2 *Second Lean* practices.

For 6 decades, our air solutions have helped leaders in manufacturing and distribution to create healthy working environments through heating, cooling, and ventilation solutions and now our culture and our people can help those same leaders create courageous cultures of continuous improvement. THAT'S IMPACT!



# NORTHERN IRELAND

**MARK IRVINE**

**DT BOXES • OWNER • PLASTIC MANUFACTURING**

---

My name is Mark Irvine, I own and run a plastics manufacturing business in Northern Ireland. Like most business owners when they start out, I was working endlessly in the business and not really getting anywhere. After a long time of working twelve-hour days, seven days a week I couldn't shake the feeling that there is something very wrong here--there has to be an easier way. All this time and effort really should be paying off and it shouldn't be such an endless struggle.

I started doing some research into company management, which is when I came across Lean and subsequently Paul Akers. I was hooked. I saw Paul's videos on YouTube and became addicted to them. It was the simplicity that I was drawn to. I implemented the morning meeting immediately and we started continuously improving in our business little by little every day. This really transformed our business. The following year our business performed better than any previous year. Incrementally over time, the struggle reduced, and I slowly claimed some personal time back. The business didn't suffer when I started working less. It continued to improve. We were working smarter, not harder, and not more, but actually less.

What I like most about Paul's approach is that it can be immediately put into action. The concepts are not layered with complicated language that means you need to get an expert in so you can understand how to implement some complicated theories and concepts. Paul's approach is genius because he puts it in such simple terms for everyone to understand and can be easily implemented by any company. Every member of the team can

understand it and therefore everyone can apply it. It's simple, but it takes commitment from every member of the company. The team really enjoys contributing and implementing their ideas and seeing the processes improve. They take ownership of this and find it very rewarding. It's the collective effort and that means we can get more done in less time and without struggling all the time and that makes all the difference.

For the past seven years, this has helped us become a very effective company at efficiently delivering products to our customers with zero inventory. Our company is a high mix of low volume product company. We manufacture large dog transport crates that are custom fitted to the shape of many different vehicles. Every product is made to order and thanks to Lean we offer same-day dispatch with zero inventory! Before Lean, our lead time was 2-3 weeks. Our competitors of similar products offer 4-5 weeks lead time. We have achieved this using the simple steps outlined in Paul's book *2 Second Lean* and YouTube videos, without increasing our workforce and by significantly reducing the struggle involved in everyday manufacturing. I can't recommend Paul's approach enough – make it simpler, continuously improve, and stay committed every day.



## MAX MAKER

**MECHANICAL ENGINEER/TRANSLATOR/LEAN CONSULTANT/PRODUCT  
MANAGER • MANUFACTURING/CONSTRUCTION/IT**

---

### HOW I GOT TO THIS POINT:

My name is Max Maker, I run a business that designs, builds, and sells unusually long drawer slides for recreational vehicles from my basement in Germany. Let me tell you how I got there. I studied Product Design Engineering at Loughborough University in the UK and received a Master's Degree in 2015. My friends started working at prestigious companies like Rolls Royce or McLaren. Having done my 8 years abroad, I wanted to return back to Germany.

At the time, my dad bought a new RV and wanted a product that helped him organize the various equipment. Recreational vehicles in Germany often have super deep and narrow storage compartments. If the vehicle is 2.5m wide, the storage compartment is too. It is deep to reach into and is also at knee height. There wasn't anything suitable on the market, so I built him some custom drawer slides. Soon enough, others asked me to build some for them as well. I started at the bottom of the efficiency scale, but I improved from there. I quit my corporate career and I'm happy I did. I have my own workshop right underneath my apartment with 3 employees and the business is doing great.

My business has 3 parts: design, manufacturing, and distribution. Lean thinking dominates all of them. It is like a law of nature; it applies to any place or thing. It is a universal law and can be used by anyone. Paul boiled it down to "Waste is bad". Avoiding it should always be the goal. Of course, I learned about

Lean manufacturing at University, but it was always very academic. Our lecturer Ran Bhamra taught us all the Japanese terms and the different manufacturing strategies work cell layouts, and so on. That gave me a good starting point, but Paul's elegant approach to The 8 Wastes really encompasses it all. It's a way to teach anyone in an instant what Lean manufacturing should be like. It is easy to remember and most importantly easy to apply. Seeing waste is what really matters.

We made so many improvements in the past 5 years that it is difficult to keep track. Let me tell you how I made my first 16 drawer slides and how we are building them now.

### **MAKING THE FIRST 16 DRAWER SLIDES:**

Why 16? I guess I just didn't have enough money at the time to purchase more material. This was the first production run. I enlisted an experienced colleague I knew from an apprenticeship as my first subcontractor. Together we cut 6m long aluminum profiles in his workshop, machined them on my homemade CNC, and then assembled them to drawer slides and stacks of multiple drawer slides. We had all of The 8 Wastes! It was incredibly tedious, but it generated a small profit. Most importantly, it gave me a starting point to improve from. His workshop was a former household stable for a few pigs. The floor was incredibly uneven and there were only two lightbulbs. He had no workshop furniture whatsoever, but a lot of junk. A pair of sawhorses acted as a table and a ladder was used as a rack to sort the cut aluminum profiles. A sheet of paper was ripped into smaller pieces that



were used as labels for the stacks of finished parts. We simply didn't have scissors or a sharpie at hand. And if we would have had them, we would have lost them instantly. We had no place to put them. We wasted a lot! Not due to a lack of talent from him or myself, we just didn't have the physical tools yet to help us with that. There were no cabinets, no racks, no label machine, no tool walls, no outlets, no Kaizen Foam, no space, no post-it notes, and certainly no workbench. A great space to start improving from, but it takes time to find out what the next investment should be. I started with €5000,- and re-invested whatever profit I made. What we had going for us was that the customers were very happy with the final product. That gave me hope to continue. We just improved from there, step by step, looking for waste and getting rid of it.

## THE BUSINESS TODAY:

Of course, it is going much better! 16 drawers would now take us roughly 5 hours to build. The initial batch took us 3 weeks. We have a lot of furniture now that enables us to store things efficiently. Frequently used tools are stored on tool walls where they are easy to find and to grab.

More special things are in tool drawers with Kaizen Foam inserts. Power tools are mostly cordless and each tool gets its own shelf compartment together with any accessories. That way you can easily pull them out and store them away again. Everything is labeled and we have little pictures on drawers to see the content from the outside. That takes some time to set up, but it is fun and it's



a long term investment. We constantly look at everything we do and try to optimize it. That is all it takes! One small example is getting long wrenches. They are easier to grab and manipulate. It doesn't cost you anything to implement, you just need to take a step back and look at what you are doing and see if there is an

easier solution. One big help for me is watching YouTube videos from other makers. There are a ton of videos out there and I always get new ideas watching them. Of course, the FastCap channel is one of them.

Our production is much smoother now. We don't struggle. There are assembly jigs mounted to sheets of plywood for each of our products. We have height-adjustable work benches on wheels and can



setup a mini production line in just 10 minutes. There wouldn't be enough space for permanent workstations. The height adjustment is important to make it work for different employees, but also for different height products.

Another tool that helps immensely is our great Prusa 3D printer. It makes all kinds of custom fixtures and paid for itself in no time. 3D printing is a slow process, but the printer can work 24/7 without getting tired. It only takes a few minutes of human time to come up with a model and start the print. Then it produces perfectly smooth, clean, and finished parts. Contrary to woodworking, it doesn't produce any noise or dust, and nobody risks losing a finger.

We also improved the shipping. We send out all our products completely pre-assembled on pallets. Even though similar sized products like BBQs, office chairs or dressers get sent flat packed. Those products are made in China! If you ship them around the world, it makes a huge difference whether you can stuff 200 or only 20 into a container. By assembling everything in our own workshop here in Germany, we can make sure the products work perfectly and we don't have to worry about efficient shipping as much. If we were sending out self-assembly kits, some customers would inadvertently struggle. That is wasteful and frustrating. Next, they would ask us for help which is extremely inefficient for both sides. Or worse, they would return the item out of frustration. It is much better for our customers to receive completely assembled and flawless drawers. Sure, we spend a little bit more on shipping, but we completely eliminated defects! There are zero

uncomfortable calls with customers, no negative reviews, and no returns. So overall, we make more profit, and our customers get a better value for their money.

In order to ship product, you need packaging. We looked at the used materials and the time spent packaging. In the beginning, it was extremely wasteful. First, we removed the bubble wrap entirely. That stuff was so thin that it wouldn't have added cushioning anyway and we needed huge amounts of it to cover our large aluminum frames. We realized that as long as the pallet was bigger than the product, there was no way a product could ever come into contact with anything that could dent it. Now we just make sure we strap it down good on top of the pallet. No cushions are needed. It saves time, money, storage space and is good for the environment at the same time. However, there was still wasted motion. Pallets were standing in the middle of the room, but the tools you needed for packaging, the tape, the clingfilm, the webbing, and the box cutter, were on shelves or hanging on the wall. We wanted it to be right where you needed it. So we built a little cart on wheels with space for all these items. Now we don't need to run around the workshop anymore. We have everything at hand while we package the pallets. This problem was solved through creativity, not money. You cannot buy a cart like this.

**Scan QR Code to  
watch a build video  
of the cart here**



Besides the design and manufacturing, there was also the distribution. In the first 3 years, I went to the giant annual German caravan trade show. At the time it seemed to me this is what you needed to do. It took about 2 weeks to prepare and it runs for 10 days straight. That was a whole month gone when I could have actually built products. The tiny booth I could afford costs €5000, - plus the hotel and transport costs. I sold some products of course, but I also had to compete for attention against all the other 1000 vendors there. Looking back, it was a huge waste of time and money! The money that I spent on one trade show alone pays for a whole year of online marketing. That way the sales are also not

bunched up in a single week but spread out. Money and time aside, it is much more comfortable to click a few buttons on my computer than to chat with potential customers for 8 hours a day. Those are Lean sales, and you don't need a business degree to know which strategy is better. Just look for waste and then to get rid of it.

From time to time, I look back at the business from a third person's perspective. What did I waste my time on in the last hour? What did I do today that actually created value? It's 12 pm already. What did I do for the first 4 hours of the day? Then I realize that answering a single email is quick, but a stream of 40 adds up. There are countless improvements to be made just by looking for waste and reducing it. A lot of very simple and insignificant-looking improvements add up and have a huge impact. Most of those improvements are very practical in nature and they are not limited to work. Learning about those simple improvements from other companies and individuals is a huge resource of inspiration for me. My mediums to contribute are YouTube and Instagram where I post-build videos from time to time and share tips from the workshop. I would love to hear from others and their Lean experience! I want to make clear, my workshop is far from perfect, but we are getting better every day.

For me, Lean thinking is the best tool there is to be successful in business. What is great about *2 seconds Lean* is the simplicity. You can apply all of the Lean Principles to your private life as well and reap the benefits. Paul has been a huge inspiration for me. He didn't invent Lean thinking but he improved it and that's what it's all about. Thank you!



## MICHAEL ALTHOFF

**YELLOTOOLS INC. • OWNER • SIGN MAKING MANUFACTURER**

---

My biggest IMPACT from or about LEAN? My team and I have been living the Lean philosophy for about 13-14 years. We started mellow, not really seeing the big benefits at first, and we got more excited along the way. We became total Lean believers over the years. We cannot imagine a life without continuous improvements anymore.

If you would have asked me about the real impact of Lean or Kaizen years ago, I would probably have answered obviously: Better workflow, easier life, more money, a super-organized shop, stunned visitors, raving customers, and more time for fun things, etc. But today I know that all these things are inevitable by-products of following some simple rules in the Lean world. All these things came for free with focusing on "What is our customer really willing to pay for and what NOT?"

So, after all these years of "learning-by-doing," the biggest impact is what it did to me and my way of looking at other people. The realization that I was wrong 99% of the time was shocking but pretty healthy at the same time. Assuming, that all other human beings around me were stupid, or at least not as smart as I thought they should be, was the biggest hold-back in my entire life. Getting the insight that 99% of the time a mistake happens, a miserable process was to blame and NOT the person. This has changed simply EVERYTHING. The way I look at human beings now is so much more relaxed and unburdened. Knowing that all the frustrations back then came out of my ignorance and yes, maybe also out of my arrogance a little bit. In a way it makes me more of a chill person and allows me to enjoy the positive things of life way more intense.

Maybe that sounds a bit esoteric, but everyone who has ever met me, and my team knows that we are more the Lean hillbillies straight out of the most beautiful German countryside. Esoterism for us is the moment you went to the bathroom the first time after 10 Beers! No, we are really down-to-the-earth and proud of what we achieved over the last 14 years. Lean had the most intensive, positive impact on all our families, our community, and all our vendors and customers. We understand the human weaknesses better and through that, we are able to counteract with improvements and set clear processes to avoid mistakes, avoid frustrations, and get rid of interpersonal conflicts since we learned to always blame the process and NOT the person next to it. This is BIG!

The only frustration left is the results you get from following the easiest recipe in the world are so incredible and Lean is really so easy, that even some German rednecks like us can understand it. So why isn't Lean thinking on every news, in every schoolbook out there and why isn't Lean THE ONE line of approach every business owner, every organization, and simple every person in the world strives for? Well, I hope books like *2 Second Lean* and Lean maniacs around the world will help change this little-by-little. I wish everyone out there a great journey like I was allowed to travel.



# NORTHERN IRELAND



## NOEL GLYMOND

---

Most people that have visited Seating Matters for the first time have said how inspirational it is and that it is the moment the lightbulb switched on. The complete opposite was true for me. My lightbulb went out! Why?

I remember how excited I was traveling up in the car listening to Paul Akers on audio and talking about how going back to implement Lean would be unbelievable and I could drive it forward. Then we began the tour, my smugness started to fade, everything that I was so sure of disappeared and my light went out. I didn't understand Lean at all. I didn't know what I was talking about. Lean was terrifying, Lean was amazing, constant, ever-growing, everybody, every day, everything.



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

I soon got over myself and started learning to think Lean and became humble again, but the mistakes didn't stop there. I didn't have confidence in myself or the team to become the problem solvers that we needed to be. We had talked about bringing in some of FastCap's FastPipe for a while, however, the thought of us actually making some desks and carts from it was frightening so we had a fantastic idea of recruiting a handyman. The list was made of what everyone needed built, expectations and excitement

was rising of what could be achieved without outside help. The day before he was due to start, a letter came through. He would not be taking the position. Disaster! We had all this FastPipe and no-one to make it.

Slowly but surely FastPipe structures started to get built because how was I to know that we had a colleague who did joinery, an artist that could do fantastic detailed drawings and templates of what was needed to be built, and a team who were only looking for a chance to learn and give it a go. I was wrong again!!!



You would think by now I got the picture about what Lean was about, but no! A few weeks later I knew that creating location barcodes for our shelves would be a game-changer in how we book stock in and out and how we do our stock takes. It was a massive opportunity. I went to Paul and proposed that we should apply to for a project grant to get an expert in to create these location barcodes as I knew it would take months to get every bay set up with a location and program that into our system.



After politely being reminded that throwing money at problems eliminates creativity, I made one phone call and had the first location barcode in operation within a few minutes.

While these mistakes are certainly significant, they don't compare to the most critical mistake of all, which was assuming that I would get resistance by asking a colleague to read books at home to help develop and learn and this is exactly what I did. When we spoke about introducing Traction or EOS as some people know it. We were to ask that everyone involved within the meeting group read and understand Traction to ensure we were all able to implement the meeting pulse effectively. I knew that a colleague wasn't fond of reading and would not be willing to take the book home and read it in his spare time so I raised my concerns and a chat was arranged to discuss. To my surprise this was welcomed immediately, not only was the book read from cover to cover, but this colleague is the best at holding us all accountable for when we go off track or make decisions that potentially go against our VTO or 10-year plan.

I have definitely gone about Lean the wrong way, and Lean taught me that everything I knew, I didn't know. Lean also taught me that I don't know what the future will hold but it will almost certainly be better through the Lean principles than staying on the same path of understanding that what you know now will be enough to have all the answers to tomorrow's problems.



# IRELAND



## PATRICK MAGEE

**LUMEN ELECTRONICS • DIRECTOR • ELECTRONIC ENGINEERING**

---

“That’s amazing! I’d love a culture like that, but it wouldn’t work here. Not in Ireland. We’re too guarded, reserved, and cynical. I’d get some strange looks if I announced improvement time and morning meetings. Besides, we do custom designs, not mass manufacturing, so a lot of that doesn’t apply. Not to mention this is electronic engineering. Being disorganized is the standard. I’ll get the tools organized but the rest of that Lean stuff won’t work here.”

Still this Paul Akers guy had won me over with his videos, so I bought some Kaizen Foam and organized a tool chest. It’s kick-ass. So began my interest in following Paul’s videos, the books, the podcast, the factory tours, it’s all amazing and inspirational! This guy is awesome! But Lean won’t work here. I know I’ve got to get organized. I’m turning a one-man consultancy into a proper product development business, with just myself and one technician. It’s fine. I’ll just work hard and it will all be good. Add another technician, an admin assistant, some subcontractors...that should put an end to the 70-hour weeks, right?

I’ve always been a hands-on engineer; I love getting the overalls on and actually putting our products on machines. That’s my Ikigai. Tonight was not Ikigai, it was 11 PM on a cold January night and I’m on my own, on the factory floor. The job is frustrating, I’ve three others that are staying late. Did I even order those parts? I was supposed to chase that invoice. My eyes are stinging. That’s the wrong drawing. The laptops are dead and I’ve to be up again at 6 AM to do this all again.

“Why are you even here? No one else does this and this isn’t

a one-off effort. This is every damn day.” The motion-activated lights were going out all around me. In silence I let them go out one by one. This really isn’t working here. Epiphanies are rare but I had one within five minutes of my first visit to *2 Second Lean* maniacs at Seating Matters.



“Stand here and watch this process,” Declan instructed. “Ok he’s cutting leather, seems well organized, very tidy. Neat, what’s next...” my internal monologue quickly interrupted by his declaration:

**“Waste, waste, value, waste,  
value, value, value, waste,  
value, value, waste”**

In the movie “The Matrix” there’s a scene where the hero’s vision changes so that he can see everything as it really is. I stared at that cutting table, absorbing what I’d just learned. Declan summed it up neatly, “The only time he’s adding value is when the knife goes through the leather, everything else is waste”.

The next morning, I eagerly announced the beginning of our Lean journey. I probably mumbled my way through the leather story, something about 8 Wastes and a guy named Paul Akers. “Has anyone any improvement ideas?” There were some strange looks. “That went terrible.” I thought, “I can’t wait to do it tomorrow.” I did and the next day, and the next. It was far from overnight but soon the team engaged in 3S’ing and started making *2 Second Lean* improvements.

When we started, over 80% of our facility was consumed

by stock and junk, just three actual workstations for value-adding. 18 months later and my team have transformed the place, inventory down by 80%, 14 workstations available for projects, and administration & engineering sharing an open-plan office. The best part is how little I had to do with it. In fact, I was consistently putting off the “big switch” moving production to the main area for fear it would interrupt service. The team took advantage of one of my trips away and got it done. My team got it.



While I’m aware just how far we have to go, I know where we are going. I take great encouragement when customers and visitors comment on the changes we have made here. “The Gemba is the salesman,” the owner of Hoks Electronics Japan informed us. “When customers come to see us; they only buy from us.” Just one of the countless amazing lessons learned on the Japan Study Mission.

The greatest impact Lean has had for me isn’t our ever-improving Gemba. It’s an amazing network of people in the Lean community that have become acquaintances and friends.

Just 18 months ago I had no one I could call a mentor, now I have access to literally dozens of the world’s best business and engineering minds. All I had to do was ask! I couldn’t have been more wrong when I told myself the *2 Second Lean* culture wouldn’t work here; it works everywhere people want to make a contribution. I’m very fortunate to have been blessed with this amazing opportunity and I’m determined to make the next 18 months an even more epic transformation.



# ONTARIO

## RICHARD EVANS

**ASSOCIATED FOR MANUFACTURING EXCELLENCE (AME CANADA)  
PRESIDENT • MANUFACTURING**

---

### From a Lean Coach Perspective

Early on in my career, I learned that problems were annoying and disrupted my life. I spent a great deal of time correcting issues that were wrong and determining why they were wrong. I'm a Manufacturing Engineer and I gained a reputation for trying to solve everyone else's problems. This resulted in me being offered a position within my organization to 'Improve the Flow' throughout the company. In the late 90's I joined an organization that focused on bringing people together to share, learn, and grow. The Association for Manufacturing Excellence brought me into the world of Lean, although, I had been practicing it for many years without knowing it had a name. It was just common sense to me. In those early days, we tended to focus on the 'Tools.' "Where do we start with Lean?" I was asked many times. "With 5S of course," I always replied. It was always tools, tools, and tools. My company had implemented 5S in 2000 and we were so good at it that we were an article in Plant Magazine discussing us having a World Class 5S Program. We did Value Stream Maps, PDCA,



Kanban, and all the other good Lean tools, and we had great successes over the years. But for some reason, after I left, it didn't stick! In 2006 I decided to start my own business, as a Lean Coach. But 6 months after I left, the World Class 5S Program died! I then realized there was no champion to drive the program, no one who had the passion to motivate the cell owners, no one to get the leaders to go to the Gemba.

This was a wake-up call for me. After all the years of seeing great gains by increasing flow, the company started to stagnate. I realized that it wasn't the 'Tools' but the leadership motivating the folks to implement the new ways. I "drank the juice" and after that, I steered my coaching towards the influencers in an organization, the folks that made all the decisions.

"Blame the process, not the person" was my focus, along with "respect for people", and an "army of problem solvers." The next few years dramatically altered my way of thinking. I became a regular volunteer for AME's Annual Lean Conference and constantly promoted leadership as the ONLY way to achieve Lean transformations. But I was still having difficulty with traditional leaders; the ones that were being measured on EBIT and we're reacting to their out-of-date monthly reports in a negative, anti-Lean way. No matter what coaching I gave, they were stuck in the past and it was really frustrating.



Then, one summer on a Wednesday, I was facilitating a week-long Kaizen event, with a team looking at the way garage door kits were assembled, and I stopped everyone to watch an AME Webinar. *2 Second Lean* by Marc Braun of Cambridge Engineering, as it was named then. As soon as I watched the evolution of 'Justin's Chair' I was hooked. OMG, this was the 'missing link.' I asked around the room what everyone thought of the webinar and to a person; all the value adders thought it was awesome. "Why can't we do that too?" I then asked the Plant Manager, Vice President

of Operations, and the CFO what they thought. Well, all they did was calculate how much money Cambridge was losing because they allowed their entire workforce to spend 45 minutes a day on improvements, and not do the production. They just didn't get it! I'd "drank the juice" years ago, but this was the 'elixir.' I'd finally found the 'gold nugget' that would whet the appetites of the naysayers.

That same afternoon I reached out to Marc via email and he invited me to be part of Paul's WhatsApp Global Lean Leadership Group (GLLS). That day changed my life. I'd been coaching several leaders at different organizations a half-day every month. I was having some good results with the leaders responding in a very positive way. However, the speed of transformation was slow. I then started to share inspirational videos from the GLLS group and Wow! What a change in attitude. Not only from Paul's vast library of truly solid gold learning but also from Ryan at Seating Matters, Marc at Cambridge, Dave at Sticky RX, and many, many more. I remember Ryan telling me that he watched Paul's video 30 times one night after hearing about *2 Second Lean* and it transformed his thinking completely. Just look at Seating Matters now.

I now facilitate an AME Consortium, and I have finally found my niche in life. I gave them all a *2 Second Lean* challenge earlier in 2020 and they are all starting to respond very positively. After COVID-19 prevented us from meeting face to face every month, we started meeting virtually. Twice a month we get together. Once to share *2 Second Lean* Improvements and "What I need help with," and once to do a deep dive on a topic that they need to help them progress. The highlight of 2020 so far was a deep dive on Kanban where we visited Seating Matters in Ireland (virtually) and 'walked' the plant floor to see a world class facility in action. Alyson and Ryan were superb and allowed us to venture into 'realms unknown' on their transformation of a company that 4 years earlier was in really bad shape. *2 Second Lean* was the catalyst that changed Seating Matters into a world class organization, and I really mean world class, just like Cambridge, Sticky RX, and FastCap.

*2 Second Lean* has had a dramatic impact on my life, and

I will never be the same. Through Paul's mentoring I have got my "second wind" in coaching Lean, and I am now 'soaring with eagles', networking with phenomenal Lean Maniacs. This has honestly been the biggest impact of my life. I am a 2 *Second Lean* advocate in my home, with a 2-bin system for my consumables, a grocery list that is in the order that I walk around the grocery store, and my tools organized to a 'T'.

Thank you, Paul, for inviting me into your world of 2 *Second Lean*. You are truly an inspirational Leader and will forever motivate me to greater heights.



# ENGLAND

## RICHARD FULLER

**COUNTY BATTERY SERVICES • MANAGING DIRECTOR**  
**BATTERY DISTRIBUTION & ASSEMBLY**

---

This is the story of County Battery Services progression from being in a state of chaos to one with more order and control.

County Battery Services was founded by my father Wilfred Terrance (Terry) Fuller. Terry left school at the age of 14 and went to work on the railway. The Second World War came, and he enlisted. After the war he took on several sales roles and in 1974 when I was 10, he started County Battery Services.



As a young boy I helped my Dad and soon learned about the business and at 14 I ran the small shop in the evening and weekends. In 1980, at the age of 16, I left school and joined the family business. In 1987, Terry passed away when I was 23. The business was left to me with 3 staff members, no written process, and everything was in my head from stock levels to debtors.

The business somehow continued to grow, and we took on more staff, took on bigger premises, bought computer systems, which caused more problems, and still had no written processes and no order.

Training people was difficult. They did not seem to remember everything I could. The place was a mess and in chaos. I was worried about going on holiday or having a day off. The business had not expanded for a few years. I went to some management courses and I tried to educate myself, but I really couldn't get it. Even though we employed experienced managers, they didn't seem to make things better. I understand now that most people don't ever want or have to write a process, they like to keep

things the way they have always been. I remember at a point where one of the warehouse staff came in and said we have no coffee. Even though the company was profitable I knew at that point I had got it wrong.

I was talking to a bank manager friend of mine who said one of his customers (Ashley Bailey from Klime-Ezee) had implemented a system that had doubled his profit in the first year and in the second year had increased by 75% further.

I said, "How's that work?" He replied, "I'll bring you the book." I asked, "Have you read it? What does it say?" He had not read it and to this day he still hasn't.

I read it cover to cover and was so wowed by it, I read it again. My journey started the next day, the 24th of July 2015. I started taking doors off of the cupboards in the kitchen (they only hide mess and waste time opening). The staff thought I had gone mad (they probably still think I am).

We had some help from Ashley Bailey and visited his facility. The company began to thrive and get better. Some of the old staff left taking the "If it ain't broke don't fix it" mentality with them. Around this time my son Isaac joined the company as a 13-year-old helper, he has come to embrace Lean as much as I have and his knowledge and management skills have soared because of it.



We started doing tours of our facility and had visitors come from all over the world. We reciprocated by sending our team to look at other companies' to share ideas.

**PEOPLE ASK WHAT DID I GET FROM "2 SECOND LEAN"?**

**EFFICIENCY:** By running with processes and continually improving those processes we have become far more efficient achieving the same turnover with 25% less staff.

**FRATERNITY:** The *2 Second Lean* community is really welcoming, it seems we all want each other to succeed.

**GREATER PROFIT:** By becoming more efficient and working with less staff, and sending out products correctly without mistake, we have naturally increased profit.

**A HAPPIER TEAM:** The team realizes they are doing a good job because they are getting compliments from customers and other team members for their great work. There is much greater job satisfaction.

**HAPPY CUSTOMERS:** Because we are serving customers better, they are naturally happier with us.

**FASTER ONBOARDING OF NEW EMPLOYEES:** I am really pleased to say my eldest daughter, Kelly, has joined the family company. She is currently helping out in the warehouse. It was easy to train her for two reasons:

- 1) she is very bright.
- 2) we had processes for all the jobs she needed to do.

**EFFICIENCY:** Fewer mistakes were being made because of the processes for all the tasks. If the task is done incorrectly then either the team member has not followed the procedure, or the procedure is wrong. It should not be difficult to correct.

***2 Second Lean's purpose is to grow people  
and build a Lean culture.***

The rest of the benefits are from all the results above. The joy it gives to see people develop is unrivaled. I am immensely proud to be part of a team “County Battery.” Our vision is to make the world a better place by developing people. We believe every company’s vision should be to make the world a better place. We at County Battery Services think we can help do that by developing people.

This is the story of our Lean journey. Thank goodness it is nowhere near the end. Please give me a call if you would like us to arrange a tour for you.



# CALIFORNIA

## RICK EGELIN

**FIREBLAST GLOBAL • OWNER • FIRE EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURING**

---

In the spring of 1986, a few years after graduating high school, I was like many young kids, looking for the direction in life that I wanted to go. Unable to clearly make a decision, I did what a lot of people do when there's a large factory in the community, I applied and got hired. My father had worked there for approximately 25 years when I applied. The company was McDonald Douglas Aircraft in Long Beach California.

During my time at McDonnell Douglas, we produced commercial and military aircraft such as the MD-80, DC-10, MD-11, and the C-17. Growing up I have always enjoyed airplanes, so the opportunity to work on them was exciting. This was a union facility with good pay and benefits--a place where people made a career and retired from. This was also the first place that I was introduced to Lean concepts, although back then we referred to it as TQMS or Total Quality Management System. During the implementation stages, I was working in the final assembly and paint processing area as a production line employee. The first noticeable change was a variety of posters that painted the walls throughout the manufacturing area. Terminology changed, although no one was very clear on what the new terminology meant or what it was intended to mean. We each were given a one-hour training class which consisted of a video on the direction that TQMS would take the company and the benefits that it offered. The benefits were mostly based around reducing the amount of time it took to produce an aircraft and reducing the cost. This was the last training that was provided on the TQMS program although the posters continued throughout the facility over the 13 years of

my employment. The name did change to TQM at a later stage, but no one explained why or if any variation was going to take place.

In 1990, I joined the Riverside County Fire Department as a volunteer firefighter. The county had 97 fire stations and was a combination department between career staff from the California Department of Forestry (currently known as CAL Fire) and local members of the community making up the volunteer program. Each station had a weekly training program for three hours on Monday nights from 7:00 PM until 10:00 PM. It was a requirement that you made three trainings per month to remain in the volunteer program. This was the first time I had an opportunity to continually learn and advance my skills at the hands of continuous training.

Over nearly a 20-year period as a volunteer firefighter, I continue to grow and advance my skills. Many people may not realize that the fire service is an extreme Lean culture. Although the term Lean is never utilized, the daily schedule of cleaning, testing equipment to ensure operation without downtime, daily improvements of technique getting into gear and breathing apparatus, continuous training, standard processes, standard layout of fire apparatus, and the family atmosphere with your fellow brothers and sisters, is the perfect example of a Lean culture. Even with all these great things listed above, most of all the fire service leadership training was not given in a class, it was displayed daily in everything that we did. When we arrived at a scene, we were never given direction on what we should do. We each had a task that we learned through training and it was our responsibility to evaluate every situation. We were leaders, we provided safety first, and we made decisions that were best suited for the team and the patient.

In 1995, while working for McDonnell Douglas aircraft and continuing as a volunteer firefighter, I began growing frustrated with the variation in the way the two agencies operated. I tried to be more organized in my career from the things I was learning from the fire service. Not realizing that TQMS was just a version of Lean and the fire service was teaching me how to improve where McDonnell Douglas had failed to show us how.

In December 1996 Boeing aircraft announced that it would acquire McDonnell Douglas. This is when it became clear that my career opportunities for the future and retirement we're slowly diminishing.

Fortunately for me in 1995 with my frustrations in the variations between the fire service and McDonnell Douglas I set out to open a training company including fire and rescue techniques. Along with the help of some others, we created a few training devices and trainings that were not found anywhere else. In the early stages of the company, we went out and offered training to career and volunteer firefighters for a small fee. By 1997 there was a demand for the products that we were building more than the services that we offered. My wife and I determined that this was an opportunity for us to develop a very desirable product and create a new industry. Being naïve, not realizing that there were some other manufactures making things on a small scale, we set out to reach the American dream, owning your own business. Fireblast was born.

Owning our own business posed several challenges for us. We had never owned a business nor been in a position to manage a business. I had no college education that could assist me in being successful. We had products and demand and that was the basis of how we started. Along the way we had our ups and downs as most businesses do, always seeming to find a way to keep the business moving in a forward direction. One of the biggest challenges was when the company grew, and the number of employees increased. I was challenged on what to do so I had to revert back to what I knew best. We had a manufacturing company and I needed to adopt the skills that I had learned in manufacturing at McDonnell Douglas. This is management! I felt that I needed to manage the people so I continued to tell people what to do at every step of the way and in some cases did the job myself with fear that others would not be successful at doing it. We were a training company doing no training internally. This continued for nearly 17 years and at the end of each year I was frustrated about the work that it took and the small reward that it brought. I was just working hard.

In 2012 I decided to start doing a little research into how to run a business. A friend of mine worked for a company that was extremely Lean. He had been there through the implementation and several members of their leadership had studied in Japan prior to introducing it to their team. He joined our company in an effort to help introduce Lean manufacturing to Fireblast. Shortly after we attempted to do this, I realized that we did not have enough knowledge on how to implement a Lean culture. As soon as it became clear, we stopped. This was our false start and I realized that if we continued any farther than at some point our lack of leadership ability and lack of knowledge would have been a huge failure and making another attempt would be nearly impossible with the team. I realize that we weren't cut out to do this and it was abandoned.

After the false start, I continue to study about Lean manufacturing reading books like *The Toyota Way* and *The Machine That Changed The World*, along with watching a variety of internet videos to help better understand the task at hand. Unfortunately, the books were far above my capabilities of determining how to implement a Lean culture in our organization. I was not having a lot of success.

In 2014 I grew extremely frustrated with the direction the business was going. We were on a record year of sales, revenue was up, the products were the best in the industry, but the amount of time that I was spending away from my family and in the facility was also growing. It was taking 16 hours a day 6 to 7 days a week continually throughout the year for me. I was exhausted and ready to give up. I wanted to look for an exit plan and was trying to strategize how I could walk away and go on to do something that would be simpler in life.

On November 28, 2014, the Friday after Thanksgiving, the facility was closed for the long holiday weekend. As usual, I was there alone, sitting in my office working on the computer, frustrated that I couldn't even take off the extended weekend. I got on the Internet and started looking around and found a FastCap tour. I watched the video with disbelief how could this be real. I have been studying and wanting to introduce Lean to our company

and it was not that simple. It almost seemed like a staged show that was put together to sell books as a promotion. With my frustration I decided to send an email to Paul Akers, who was in the videos, to ask some questions. Mind you this was a holiday weekend and I sent an email and immediately got a response. He was in Costa Rica on vacation, surfing, and responded back to me within about 10 minutes.

This was the first point when I realized this must be a genuine person, I would have never done that. Not only did he respond to my email, he asked me if I had Skype or FaceTime capability. Having both I told him that once he returns from his vacation, I'd like to discuss Lean manufacturing with him. Paul asked me to provide him with my contact information and to give him 10 minutes and he would contact me.

About 10 minutes went by and a Skype call came in. When Paul appeared on the screen, (and I can't leave out the description) he was sitting in a lawn chair on the beach with his shirt off his hairy chest exposed and his hair wet from just coming out of the water. He explained to me that he was trying to learn how to surf and then if you did it for 30 days, like any other task it would become a habit and he would be a surfer. We spoke for about 15 minutes and I explained to him my challenges and how I didn't understand how he was successful at what he was doing. There were a lot of things said and I don't remember them all but the two things that clearly come to mind and always have stuck with me were bold statements from Paul.

First, he asked me, "What are you good at?" I replied, "I'm not a very good business owner due to lack of experience but I have worked in manufacturing my whole life and I understand manufacturing and know-how to efficiently and effectively run the facility. It's definitely what I'm best at." Paul's response was staggering. He said, "The things we think we're good at are usually the things we are failing at. If you feel you're good at something, you're less likely to spend the energy trying to improve it because you're satisfied. If we know we have deficiencies, then we tend to work harder at improving the deficiencies and that's where we tend to make our improvements."

Immediately it made sense to me because rarely did I try to improve my ability to run the manufacturing facility, but I was continuing to always try to improve my business skills and understanding as an owner. The second and most impactful statement Paul made near the end of our conversation was, “YOU are the problem!” The statement made me angry. I thought who is this guy to judge me? I asked how can I be the problem? I work harder than everyone here. I’m here all hours of the day, night, and weekends while others are at home. He said, “That’s the problem. If you were doing things as a true leader you wouldn’t be there near as much or work as hard. You need to learn to work smart. Think about that for a bit and we would talk again in the future.” He asked me to give him a call after the holidays. I sat there thinking about this over the next two weeks. Could he be right?

After the call with Paul, I continued to watch videos of FastCap on the internet. Additionally, I ordered a copy of *2 Second Lean* that he had recommended during our call. I did my best to understand the simple things that they were doing and how it affected daily life. The more videos I watched the clearer it became. I was the problem. As simple as the “Waste of the Lean Burrito” or just simply “Fixing What Bugs You” in small increments would make life simpler. Once the book arrived, I read it in one sitting. I realized that he was onto something. I sat with my leadership team and explained to them that everything that I had been doing was wrong. I lived in two worlds, one was the manufacturing world from the aircraft industry where I learned management skills. The second world was from the fire service where I learned leadership skills. I realize that when we started the business, I had adopted the wrong skill set. I told them from this point forward things were going to change. I made it a requirement for the entire leadership team to read *2 Second Lean*. We discussed as a group how to roll out the philosophies from within the book and how to keep it simple and continually work to improve the way we did everything each day.

After the leadership team read *2 Second Lean*, we agreed that each day we would spend one hour together as Lean leaders and develop a plan on how to make Fireblast successful. On

January 12, 2015, we started the day off with our first morning meeting. We spent about 30 minutes discussing the new direction that we were going. I stood in front of the team and told them that we had daily struggles and they had other challenges throughout the day that they may not have recognized, or just seems that this is the way it needed to be done, and that was a result of my poor leadership. I told them it was my fault and I promised that I would do a better job at being a leader and help to make their lives better. I explained that we would be creating training classes and that each individual would have the opportunity, not only to participate but help create training that would improve the lives of the people they work with on their team. We handed a copy of the book to each individual to read, so they could better understand the new vision that we were speaking about. By mid-February, we had started our training classes and I continued to study to be a better leader. The morning meetings continued, and we still have one to this day. It has become a staple of our environment and an absolute necessity for our success.

Over the past five years, I continue to educate myself as a leader and continue to train our team. I have put together study missions with our team and have traveled to countless facilities around the United States and abroad. Each trip we take 3 to 10 team members to other Lean facilities to learn and see what makes them successful. Each time we return we see our team, our facility, and our products improve. I have traveled to Japan on Paul's study groups on Japan Teams 11, 14, and 24. Team 11 was the first trip. I traveled by myself and met a lot of amazing people like Ryan Tierney, and his team at Seating Matters. This was the first point where I realize how much Lean is about your team and team members. It was very clear that the most important part of Lean is the people. This was something I never learned in the aircraft industry. It was also clear that I wasn't to manage people. I was to manage tasks and lead people. This was something I have learned in the fire service. I followed up with Teams 14 and 20, each time taking three members of my team from Fireblast so they could clearly see our vision was aligned with the greatest manufacturing company in the world and encouraging other business relationships

to join in the experience. I traveled to 3 Global Lean Leadership Summit's (GLLS) in Colorado, Missouri, and Germany and hosted the 2020 GLLS in California with partner Phenix Technology. This was beyond my wildest dreams.

I mention Ryan Tierney from Seating Matters earlier. I need to explain the relationships that I have gained with the 2 *Second Lean* family. Everyone will be there for you every day. Utilizing Voxer or WhatsApp, the connections and communications are simple. If you're struggling with a task or improvement or just looking for support, everyone in this group is available to you. This is quality support with experience and knowledgeable individuals willing to help one another. You will not find this anywhere!

My example of this willingness to help is Ryan allowing 4 members of the Fireblast team to travel to Ireland and work in his facility for a week. He took them in and put them to work on the manufacturing floor assembling chairs. Without 2 *Second Lean* this could have never happened and the experience for our leaders was priceless.

My entire life is different since starting this journey. At home, my efficiency and organization are far better than before. You need to confirm with my wife, but I feel that I'm a better husband and easier to deal with than I was previously. In business, there is old Rick and new Rick, as labeled by one of our Lean leaders early on in our journey. Without Paul's harsh words, new Rick would have never come out. Thanks Paul and thank you 2 *Second Lean*.



# NORTHERN IRELAND



## RYAN TIERNEY

### SEATING MATTERS • DIRECTOR • CLINICAL THERAPEUTIC SEATING

---

On 14th January 2015, my life changed forever. My business wasn't running the way I wanted it to run. I felt stressed and overworked. I was in search of a better way to live, to work, and to think.

My lightbulb moment came when I stumbled upon Paul Akers on YouTube while sitting at my kitchen table. I sat up all night watching Paul's videos. I was completely overwhelmed with the idea that everything in my life could get better, incrementally, forever! What attracted me to *2 Second Lean* so much was the fact that it was SIMPLE! *2 Second Lean* and Paul's teachings have transformed my business and my whole outlook on life.

We started applying *2 Second Lean* at Seating Matters the day



after I came across Paul on YouTube and we have never stopped. We have transformed our company into a world-class example

of what *2 Second Lean* is and how it operates. We have welcomed thousands of visitors from all over the world to visit us and experience this unique way of working. In the spirit of paying it forward, we have helped hundreds of companies and thousands of people across Ireland and the UK transform their companies with this simple concept.

I hope this book has the same effect on you that it had on me. I hope after reading this book you get inspired to tap into the genius that is inside each and every one of your people and together change the way you approach life. I will be eternally grateful for Paul's teachings and for the ability to pass this thinking and knowledge onto my children from an early age.



## SEAN MILLER

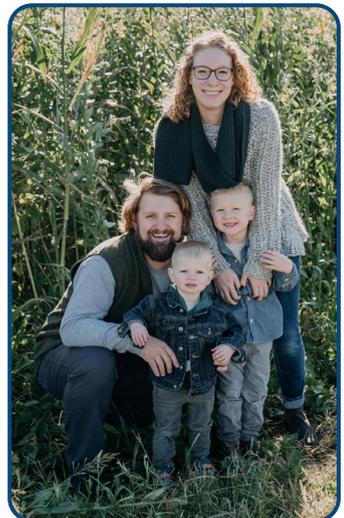
**MARTIN PARTITIONS • GENERAL MANAGER • PACKAGING**

---

Growing up in central California, I struggled with academics. Even in fourth grade, I was not able to read or spell. My parents tried hard to figure out how to help me learn these important skills. I was enrolled in a two-week spelling camp before starting in a private school that Fall. Despite improving as a student, I had already “learned” that I wasn’t unable to learn anything from reading and that school wasn’t valuable. With my parents' support, I eventually did see the value of education, enough to earn a bachelor’s degree in business administration.

During my last year in college, my parents purchased a partition manufacturing business located southeast of Columbus, Ohio. Instead of jumping straight into the new family business, I moved to Tacoma, Washington, for both a change of scenery and to gain some additional work experience. While living in the Pacific Northwest, I worked for two great family-run businesses and married a beautiful, intelligent, and thankfully patient young woman. While we were away, my parents doubled the size of the business back in Ohio and were curious if we would be interested in moving back closer to the family, if I were to get a job offer.

In 2010, my wife and I relocated to Ohio, and for the next 5 years, I worked to learn the business of



partitions and see what value I would bring to Martin Partitions. One of the draws of the company was the unique hiring practices



that built our workforce--through partnering with local rehabilitation facilities and programs for the developmentally disabled. I was able to work with diverse groups and help them build confidence and find fulfillment. But I was still missing what I could bring to the table.

In 2015, I happened to be back visiting Seattle on a work trip with my wife. We took the opportunity to introduce our six-month-old son, Konrad, to the friends and family we had in the area. During the visit, one of my friends called with a last-minute invitation for us to join him with his father and their sons at, "Friends and Family Day" at the Boeing 737 factory in Renton, Washington. On September 20, we spent the day walking the factory while Boeing staff explained how they increased production using things they've learned from companies in Japan. They sent me away with two books to read to better understand what this "Kaizen thing" was all about. After realizing I was in over my head, I sought out people I considered to be business experts, who recommended more books. Although the concept of Kaizen sounded like something that would be helpful to me, I still didn't understand it. It seemed too complex and too overwhelming. As someone who never really excelled in school, the documentation seemed daunting, and I was about ready to just move on.

Thankfully, while ordering a replacement for a great product recommended by a friend (thank you, Scott Markwood), I noticed there was a book written by the owner of the company who made the product. At the time I wrote it off as another self-absorbed business owner, who thought he had something very interesting to say. But for some reason, the memory of this book popped in my head as I was about to give up. I'm still unsure what caused me to remember the book was about to Lean, but I made my way over to FastCap's website and ordered a copy. That's when Kaizen started to make sense.

I read my first copy of *2 Second Lean* in a few hours. Page after page, chapter after chapter, I couldn't believe how something I didn't understand after reading multiple books made so much sense when presented in such a simple form. The book presented Kaizen as all about making small improvements - why not try to eliminate two seconds from a process? The concept isn't about the charts and graphs – it is about improving everything in your life, every day, starting with making one thing two seconds quicker than it was the day before.

I was so excited to start implementing *2 Second Lean*. I created a video explaining how to use 3S time and introduced our morning meeting right away. Everything was going to be perfect! Except it wasn't.

To my surprise, not everyone wanted to improve, not everyone wanted to change and everyone definitely did not want to present at the morning meeting. I was naïve and did not implement *2 Second Lean* as well as I would have liked. While I was trying to figure out what went wrong, I posted a YouTube video asking for a Lean mentor. I knew Paul Akers often talked about how



many people contact him in a day. I didn't feel like I should reach out – not because he wouldn't help, but I felt like I had not earned that benefit yet. Thankfully, Thomas Rhiner, the Lean Farmer, randomly came across my video and offered to help. We still Voxer at least weekly, if not daily. I have learned so much from Thomas and have been introduced to many wonderful people. Shortly after this, I got over my insecurity about talking with Paul. I am very glad I did. He has helped in any way possible and encourages me to grow past what I thought possible.



Fast forward four years and my life is completely different. Now reading 40 books a year, I instituted a company book club where we read books to help grow our people (thank you, Cambridge Engineering, for sharing this idea). I have lost 40 pounds and counting and found the time to learn to play the guitar and ukulele. Almost every boundary about myself I thought I knew has been challenged. Paul did a presentation at Biola University in which he said, “Lean is just the Gospel dressed up in a business suit.” This idea was an amazing revelation for me and probably was one of my biggest “Aha” moments. One of the reasons *2 Second Lean* resounded so well with me is the parallels between the two – I know studying Lean has also improved how I view the Bible.

Through *2 Second Lean*, I’ve learned how to be consciously considerate of other people and not just care for caring's sake. Rather than just jumping to fire someone because they can't get the job done, I’m curious to find out why they aren't getting the job done.

I’m also very thankful to be invited to be part of this special book. I've had the privilege of reading some of the other stories while working on my own. It's an honor to be here with many of the people who have supported my journey. The *2 Second Lean* community is very generous, and I've frequently been re-energized by their advice on issues I've faced. Often times they were unaware of their impact. Additionally, the opportunity to reflect and write about my *2 Second Lean* journey thus far has been an eye-opening and humbling experience. I did not realize how far I have come and how fortunate I have been to have the support of Paul and the community that has developed around him.



## SEBASTIAN MCLEOD

TRIPPNT • CEO • HEALTHCARE EQUIPMENT

---

In the fall of 2018, I first heard of 2 *Second Lean* from an engineer at Cambridge Engineering during an awards ceremony in St. Louis, MO. The company my mother created, TrippNT, was there to accept the Small Manufacturer Award of the Year. We were about to receive the second most prestigious award being given out, and I was trading pleasantries with an engineer from a company I'd never heard of. He kept talking about how he worked for such a great company. I nodded, smiling and listening while in my mind I was thinking, "Yeah buddy, our company is pretty sweet too. We have a corporate chef, do all kinds of activities on and off the clock with our employees, and by the way, we are here to pick up one of the best awards they're giving out. I get that you guys have a great company and all but wait till you figure out who we are!"

Within three months of me standing in that hotel conference room listening to the guy from Cambridge Engineering, so much of what I thought I knew that was good about TrippNT would change.

In 1991 I joined the US Army. I was on a tank for three years directly after high school. I really enjoyed the service, but I had my heart set on going to college and exited after my first tour. While I was in the army, my mother, a chemist, had started a new business with my dad in the basement of their house. Dad had worked for McDonnell Douglas, the aerospace manufacturer in Long Beach, CA for many years. He also had experience as a construction worker and was pretty handy with most tools. Mom had seen a need for more organization in the lab, (she suggested

saying that the product was a cart) and with her mind, his hands, and both of their hearts, TrippNT was born. They worked hard building the business over the next few years.

After I returned from the army, I went to school at night and worked at waterproofing basements during the day. I would frequently spend weekends at my parent's place and chat about how their business was and look over the fifteen or so products they made and sold. The business continued to grow over the next several years. Shortly thereafter, I joined the Kansas City Fire Department and simultaneously became TrippNT's first part-time employee in 1996.

None of us really knew much of anything when it came to running a manufacturing business. Luckily, for the next decade or so there were not too many challenges in the production aspect of the business while my parents were active and involved daily. There were only a handful of employees in the shop and keeping a handle on quality and productivity still seemed manageable. It wasn't until 2010 that we started actively looking for solutions to our production problems.

By then TrippNT had about twenty-five employees. Over the years we had significantly added more products. Further, we offered choices in those products, more sizes, more shapes, more colors. We also added products more complex in nature. We were now building laboratory and medical carts. We went from bills of materials that had one or two items on them to products that had dozens. Things were getting complicated and we were starting to hit a brick wall with production. For seventeen years we'd managed this business with no formal education or knowledge of manufacturing and now we were starting to struggle. Our manufacturing processes were starting to restrict our growth. The fact that we had always experienced so much success in the past while growing the business was really starting to work against us. It took me two years to figure out that I didn't have the needed skills to get past this hurdle, and that I was going to need help.

In South Kansas City, I visited a company called Labconco and was introduced to something called Lean. I was taking a tour of their manufacturing space and the Director of Engineering was

telling me about the improvements that were made in the welding area, and how all of the welders had participated in the process. I'd always admired Labconco for its culture and openness to share new ideas. If they were doing Lean, I thought this was something to look into for TrippNT. We started off by reading books about 5S and Lean manufacturing, then ultimately that lead us to a local community college and our first Kaizen event.

2014 was a landmark year for us. It was the first time we actually shut down the shop for two days and did a Kaizen event. Everyone got involved and some incredible improvements were made. We were led by an industrial engineer at the community college. It seemed as though we were on our way to becoming more efficient, productive, engaged, and profitable!

Then reality set in. The whirlwind of the business took back over. Consumers were demanding, lead times were creeping out again, and customer service issues were on the rise. Even though we had seen such an amazing spike in efficiency and morale, our Kaizen events were the first thing to be cut when we didn't have the "time." We never did another Kaizen event of that magnitude again. It just seemed the expense and the effort was too great. Not to mention that after the events were actually over everyone in the organization would move on to their real jobs and completely disengage in any sort of process improvements. Even I felt the huge effort it would take to ignite another Kaizen event single-handedly. It was just too much to sustain.

The next few years were frustrating. Business continued to grow but it was taking the brute strength of some very committed employees to hold all the pieces together and the reality was, we knew we could do better. We just didn't know how.

Fast forward to September 2018, we were receiving the Best Small Manufacturing company award from the Missouri Association of Manufacturers. Life seemed good. I'm having a drink before the event with a guy who starts talking about a book that made a big difference in the company where he worked. Honestly, I didn't really pay attention to what he was saying. It seemed that I was always being "sold to" and this time didn't seem any different. To be polite, I did write the name of the book down

but didn't actually read it until three months later. After I read the book, I thought to myself that there was something there, but I didn't quite know what. For several weeks I continued to think of the possibilities about what Paul was saying, and things started to make more sense.

I had an upcoming trip about three hours away, so I decided to download the audio version and listened to it on the drive there and back. That's when I started to understand just how simple this whole concept of *2 Second Lean* was. Hearing the energy and passion in Paul's voice just tied the entire thing together. I can only speak for myself, but when I finished listening to *2 Second Lean* on that road trip, I had such an overwhelming feeling of peace inside. I had spent the last 8 years pushing, pulling, arguing, fighting, and scratching my head, not knowing how to get to a place that TrippNT was headed and now, after that six-hour drive, I knew exactly what needed to happen. I understood it clearly. I had the confidence I needed to explain it to anyone at work. It was beautifully simple, and now it was time to start improving.

We officially started modeling *2 Second Lean* on January 9th, 2019. We read the book together as a company five pages at a time. Everyone in the organization participated. Without getting into all of the gritty details I can tell you that the biggest change that has happened to me is that going to work is absolutely fun every single day. We have been following Paul's model for almost two years. Our company has made over two thousand improvements and over nine hundred improvement videos. Improving something every day becomes embedded in our culture more and more every day. The community of people that I have been part of is nothing short of amazing. The support, kindness, and generosity of the community that Paul Akers has assembled is unbelievable. In 2019 and early 2020 we visited Vibco, Cambridge Engineering, FastCap, Xylem Design, Warrensburg Collision, Fireblast, and Phenix Technology Inc. Each one of the owners of these companies was extraordinarily generous with their knowledge and time. At the beginning of *2 Second Lean* it took time for us to form a cohesive team function, but there was always someone to reach out to and ask questions along the way. I cannot thank these companies enough for their

support and encouragement.

The result? The culture of TrippNT, as great as it was before, has gotten better. To say that this has been life-changing is an understatement. Every day is a new day. Every day presents so many opportunities because Paul Akers was able to boil down his message in such a simple and easy-to-understand way. Our company is an exciting place to be and every person who works here knows that tomorrow is guaranteed to be better because they improved something today.



# PENNSYLVANIA

## SHAWN R. GROSS

### CORPORATE ENGINEERING MANAGER • VIKING PLASTICS

---

My name is Shawn Gross. I am a corporate engineering manager in the plastics injection molding industry currently at Viking Plastics. Over my 20+ year career in serving automotive, medical, and packaging customers, I have observed several roll outs of methods for business improvement and Lean manufacturing. None had the impact and sustainability of *2 Second Lean*.

Our business discovered *2 Second Lean* in 2011, and it has been a blessing to me personally and professionally. From the time I watched Paul Akers perform his morning walk on a YouTube video, I knew the ideas and principles promoted in *2 Second Lean* would yield transformational results. I have applied *2 Second Lean* in my career, in my home life, and in my service to organizations, such as my church, local non-profits such as my YMCA. I observe many of my peers doing the same. You will find great joy in seeing the happiness people have because they experience less frustration, better relationships, higher quality, and more engagement.

At Viking Plastics, we initiated our Lean culture journey by identifying a small area of our business (approximately 18 employees) and discussing the concepts in the book. We purchased



2 *Second Lean* books and worked closely with our employees to discuss our vision for the future. Together, we learned the 8 wastes and how to see value in our processes. We began to work on small improvements, and we initiated a daily “drumbeat” meeting to grow and share together. The progress and enthusiasm became contagious! Within several months of introducing the book to that small group, we began sharing 2 *Second Lean* across our 3 shifts and 100+ employees in all departments. 4 Drumbeat meetings were started to provide alignment, education, and sharing opportunities for all employees. In our first year, we documented thousands of improvements that helped eliminate “papercuts” in our work that were causing frustration and poor quality.

We have considered our Lean efforts to be a culture journey vs a destination. Our leaders have embraced it and worked to make it part of the DNA of our organization by being directly engaged and personally committed. It required change at all levels. It is an evolutionary process. We started with the basics in our drumbeat meetings (learning to see waste, sharing improvements, daily sales, quality) and have added additional topics such as educational videos, birthday recognition, and sharing of thanks/gratitude.

Setting up our 2 *Second Lean* journeys required our leadership team to agree on the process and be aligned with the steps we were taking and the timing. For some employees, the concepts did not resonate and they “weeded themselves out” of our company. However, our efforts have continued to focus on moving the process forward and embracing our people to make work fun and less frustrating. This journey should have you hiring for the culture you are building and bringing in talent that



desires to make daily improvements.

A year into *2 Second Lean* we “juiced” the process by starting Viking Academy. Employees write letters of interest for being selected to participate in a series of classes that provide deeper understanding of Lean concepts, company financials, quality, and other aspects of our business. While I lead the classes, we have other managers presenting on various aspects of our business so they can help grow our team. From the leadership team to new operators, across all our shifts, these classes are a mix of employees who want to learn and grow with us. Since 2012, over 90 employees have graduated from our Academy.

Running multiple shifts and rolling out *2 Second Lean* has many challenges. When do we meet? How do we create time? Do



we create overlap time in our shifts? How can we afford to do that? How do we trust people to make good improvements? How do we get people to talk in front of people? Those challenges are overcome

with the commitment and open dialogue among the leadership team. For Viking, we added complexity to our journey by acquiring additional molding facilities and growing to well over 350 employees across 4 plants. However, the recipe for success is still *2 Second Lean*. As we added facilities, we purchased the books, shared the videos, and promoted the idea of starting simple (learning the 8 wastes, making small improvements, and sharing at a drumbeat meeting). Whether it is in our mold making facility or one of our injection molding plants, our drumbeat meetings have been the backbone for our journey and development of our people.

We are almost 10 years into our journey. Perhaps the biggest pitfall I have observed is the pull to do things the old way. Waste is like gravity. So is the pull to go the old way. I have seen it with companies that have toured our facility and started the journey but succumbed to doing things the way that have previously. I have felt

the pull internally as we grow. Leadership MUST be dedicated to the success of this process. It is a process that sometimes has you clawing your way forward when you feel you should be sailing smoothly. The key is to stay the course!

I cannot overstate the impact *2 Second Lean* has had on my professional and personal life. I am joyful because I am learning new things, being creative, watching people grow, and seeing our company and organizations excel because of small, daily improvements. Being part of a vast, global network of *2 Second Lean* fans is rewarding and encouraging.



# WASHINGTON

**SIMONE CANEPARO**

**SAP AMERICA INC • SENIOR SUPPORT ENGINEER • SOFTWARE**

---

## ENTROPHY

*“Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never--in nothing, great or small, large or petty--never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.”*

*-Winston Churchill, address to Harrow School on October 29, 1941*

There is a war going on. A war against the enemy of degradation. The degradation of everything we see around us and everything is within us. Believe it or not, we all are going to die. Science calls it the second principle of thermodynamics. The Bible calls it the curse of sin. In the first case, science has very little solutions to it. They can mitigate the effects. For Christians like me, the long-term solution is the redeeming work of Jesus. In the meantime, whether we believe in science or in Jesus, we all have to deal with the constant fight against degradation, the tendency of every single element to move towards chaos rather than order.

In 2017 I was preparing for a job interview. I had (and I am still) working in software support and I was pursuing new opportunities. One of them required knowledge of Lean methodologies. I didn't know a bit about Lean, hence I started searching on Amazon for books about Lean. I read several reviews and they were all BORING. At one point I saw this cover with a happy guy, which intrigued me. As I always do with books that have a preview, I read it to see if it was worth buying. I was literally caught by it after reading the introduction. The concepts

were so simple that even a child could understand them. And it was pure fun. Since then, *2 Second Lean* has become a part of my life. I am always fighting my war against waste and against my sloppiness. However, whereas war implies suffering and loss, with the *2 Second Lean*, we only have fun and constant successes.

*2 Second Lean* is a powerful mitigation of the second principle of thermodynamics and the great alchemist is Paul Akers. He took Lean to a level that can be easily understood by every person with a brain and will to stop the struggle. From children to C-levels or billion-dollar companies, anyone can become a *2 Second Lean* maniac.

In my work area, we don't see tangible products coming out of the door, hence for most of the people, Lean is completely ignored. Notwithstanding this, every morning I do my 3Ss (i.e., Sweep, Sort, Standardize), I have a one-person morning meeting, and I constantly try to identify and remove waste in my daily job and at home.

However, the greatest impact of *2 Second Lean* in my life has been in my music ministry. Since 2014 I had been working at the arrangement of the 153 songs of the Genevan Psalter (XVI Century). I had been running in circles because the work was incredibly complex and my spare time was very limited. Each song required transcribing the scores from the original ones, arranging the melodies, practicing them, setting up the studio, recording multiple tracks, mixing, mastering, making the videos, and publishing them on the website. Setting up the studio was taking twenty minutes, hence I had to record songs in batches and then if something was wrong, I had to re-record them.

After 3.5 years I had only recorded ten songs, and when they came back from the mastering, I was not satisfied with the final product. Should I have given up? No way! At that time, I just finished translating *2 Second Lean* into Italian. Thus, I decided to start the project from scratch applying the *2 Second Lean* improvements while removing the waste and fighting the struggle. The first impactful decision was to choose one instrument only--the guitar. Songs could have multiple tracks, but just the guitar. Secondly, I applied the concept of Single Minute Dye Exchange(SMED).

As mentioned earlier, setting up the recording studio would take me twenty minutes, which was taking a considerable part of my available time. Small, constant improvements allowed me to start recording in three minutes only. The cleanup phase was dramatically reduced as well, so I was able to record a song with multiple guitar tracks in one hour, compared to three or four, so I could record a couple of songs per week and, most importantly, using one-piece flow. In the end, I have been able to complete the project in two years, with the desired level of quality. Without *2 Second Lean*, it would have taken me fifty or more years, and who knows what the quality would have been...

Today, *The Genevan Psalter for Guitar* is on Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music, and other streaming platforms, listened to by people from more than eighty countries and with more than forty thousand streaming.

As payback, I decided to translate into Italian Paul Akers' books *2 Second Lean*, *Lean Health* (Next will be *Banish Sloppiness*), so that people from my native country who don't speak English can learn about this revolutionary, inspiring and rewarding approach that improves everything and everyone!

If you are curious about my job interview that brought me to this, I didn't get the job. I got more! The lesson I learned is, never to give up! Keep on failing! Keep on learning from your mistakes and improving everything you can, 2 Seconds at a time. Fight entropy! Never give up!



# WASHINGTON



## TED PANCOAST

**TED PANCOAST WOODWORKING • OWNER • WOODWORKING**

---

Quantifying the impact of Paul Akers book, *2 Second Lean*, in our shop can really be boiled down to one word: enormous! If I was allowed two words: life-changing. Three words: hard to believe. That being said here's my attempt to share our story.

My name is Ted Pancoast. I own a small commercial cabinet shop in Kettle Falls, WA about 80 miles north of Spokane. I live there with my wife and 9 adopted children. We have 11 acres of fully wooded land surrounding our house with the shop, a short walk down the driveway. We are extremely blessed to live and work in such a beautiful area.

I founded the company in the mid-1990s after having studied electrical engineering at the University of New Hampshire and Colorado State University. While I was eager to have a successful company, I lacked the necessary business leadership skills for the company to really thrive. We had some success on and off over 20 years but overall, I usually felt as if there was something missing.

I worked all the time. I had no energy for things outside of work. Worst of all, we were barely getting by financially. I knew that something had



to change. We had adopted 3 children and we were doing our best to provide for them, but I wanted to do more. I knew other kids needed help. In an act of grasping at straws one night, I typed in

Google Search, “running my business better.” I surfed around a bit, not really expecting anything major to come of it. Somewhere along the way, I saw the *2 Second Lean* book and it caught my attention because I have been a FastCap customer for a long time.

I didn’t know the owner had written a book and I had never met Paul Akers. I loved their products, so I decided to order a copy even though I’m a slow reader and I hate to read. Little did I know that reading this book would be the turbo charge that my company had always needed!

When the book arrived, I sat down one night and looked it over. Usually, I struggle to have books hold my attention. This was different. I read the entire thing in 2 sittings over 2 nights. I was inspired by the description in the book of the changes to the Laserjamb manufacturing process to try and change from batch and queue manufacturing to a one-piece flow system. I went to work the next morning moving machines around to give it a try. I figured we didn’t have anything to lose. My people thought I had lost my mind, but the results spoke for themselves.

I knew that studying Lean and applying the concepts of *2 Second Lean* into my life would make things change in a big way. A couple of years later I was able to meet Paul when I went to Japan on Study Mission 14. I consider myself fortunate and blessed now to count Paul Akers as my friend. That was certainly one of the best trips in my life.

As a result of the studies and getting on a Lean journey we have been able to accomplish more than I ever thought possible. Our equipment in the cabinet shop is 10 times better than I thought we would ever be able to afford. We have systems in place to manage the raw inventory that we have always struggled to keep an accurate inventory and to have a place to keep it. In short, we have totally changed the business culture. It’s not perfect by any stretch, but we have been on the Lean path for 8 years now. We have daily morning meetings and we make daily 2 second improvements. Everyday things are getting better and better. That is the real magic of Lean.

On a personal front, I have more time, energy, and money now than I ever did before. My wife and I have been able to

complete 6 more adoptions since I read the book bringing the total to nine adoptions. Six of my children are deaf. Caring for special needs children can be very expensive and time-consuming. I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Paul and my friends in the *2 Second Lean* community for



making this all possible. The best part of it all for me is I have been able to build a company that I am proud of and I will be able to hand over to my children. My 3 oldest children now work in the shop and I can't wait to see what the future holds for us. If you would have told me 10 years ago that we would spend the next 10 years and over 2 million dollars adopting kids I would have said you were crazy.

If I hadn't lived it, I don't think I would believe it myself. I view *Lean* as the ultimate weapon. It's the power we can use to change the world. I say to anyone who will listen, grab onto the altruistic part of your nature. I know that everyone who reads this book has the power to do good things and has great ideas about helping the planet. Harness the power of *2 Second Lean* and help people. Make the world a better place!



# VIRGINIA

## THOMAS RINER FANCY HILL FARM • OWNER • FARMING

---

When I was 21 years old, I started working at a very large manufacturing plant that did high consequence precision manufacturing work. After eight years of moving into different positions, I took a job with the process improvement group. Starting in the group we went through five weeks of intense training on Lean Six Sigma. Following three years of training and working projects I was certified as a Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt.

I was trained in Six Sigma, Lean Manufacturing, Design for Six Sigma, Hoshin Planning, Theory of Constraints, and Vulnerability Assessment. Over the eight years, I was in the group I worked transactionally, quality, span, design, and modeling projects. I worked in numerous states, at sister plants, traveled to naval bases, government laboratories, nuclear power plants, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission headquarters near Washington

DC, and multiple Department of Energy sites. I worked with high consequence security groups, human resources, IT, operations, engineering, safety, and quality control.

From a process improvement perspective, I was what most people would consider an expert. Little did I know that with all the training and experience I acquired, I completely missed it. I had missed something so elegant and simple that it would eventually change every aspect of my



life. What surprises me, to this day, is that it would take farming to help me understand how I had misunderstood Lean.

My wife, Jenny, and I have been happily married for over twenty years. When we were dating, we loved farms and would ride around looking at them. We both dreamed of owning a farm of our own. After fifteen years of marriage, we purchased the property that would become Fancy Hill Farm.



Once we moved to the farm, we started raising livestock to be more self-reliant. After a short time, people started asking if they could buy our eggs and the meat we had raised. We had so many people making requests that Jenny and I decided to start selling livestock and meat. What started with three or four chickens and one pig rapidly grew. In a short period of time, we had one hundred chickens, multiple cows, and forty hogs. We had one of the largest hog farms in the county where we lived.



Jenny and I had all the problems of growing a small business and the normal problems that farmers face every day. I was working a full-time job, and Jenny had two active teens in the house that she was homeschooling. Cash flow problems were an issue along with long lead times for the products we were selling. Over time, Jenny and I became overwhelmed and we couldn't keep up with all the changes on the farm. The



farm had reached a breaking point and we both began to talk about giving up on farming. Jenny and I knew we would hate to do that, but we couldn't see any way through the enormity of what the farm had become. With all my business experience and process improvement knowledge, I couldn't figure out what to do. We needed a solution and I was frustrated that I didn't have one.

That is when a co-worker introduced me to *2 Second Lean*. I read the book and began watching Paul Akers' videos. While I had a head knowledge of everything that Paul covered in his book (I was supposed to be an expert) I had never really grasped Lean. Over time, I would eventually watch every video that Paul Akers ever made (literally). With each small improvement video, I began to see the power of making a small improvement every day. Through the videos, I began to truly understand the power of Lean. When I started to 'Fix What Bugged Me' in my own life I started to see waste. Once you start to see waste, you can never unsee it. That waste will drive you crazy and you will do everything in your power to eliminate that waste.

Eventually, I reached out to Paul and he began to mentor me. I was able to visit FastCap at one of the first Global Lean Leadership Summits. Eventually, I traveled to Japan with Paul where I went on a life-changing Lean Study Mission. Along the way, people began calling me the Lean Farmer. I started the YouTube channel called The Lean Farmer. With every improvement video I made, my knowledge of Lean grew. There is something powerful about making a video where you show the waste and then show the improvement. Our farm life was and still is challenging, but *2 Second Lean* changed everything. We began to see waste on the farm and even though things were crazy busy we started making small improvements. Those small improvements saved our dream of having a farm.

As time passed, I began applying *2 Second Lean* to my health and what I ate. Even when we traveled, we made small improvements to everything we did. I eventually began applying *2 Second Lean* to all aspects of my life including what I read, my thoughts, my goals, and how I wanted to live my life. *2 Second Lean* changed everything about my life. Each day I get to relish in

the improvements I have made. Doing pushups as soon as my feet hit the floor in the morning, pulling my toothbrush out of Kaizen foam, what I eat in my lunch, and even how I pack my lunch are just some of my improvements. Throughout the workday, I'm surrounded by small improvements. When I get home to work on the farm, I see improvements with how we store grain, how we get grain, the order in which we feed and water animals.

With all the training and knowledge that I had been given in the process of continuous improvement, I completely missed the beauty and simplicity that is Lean. Like most people, I tried to over complicate Lean. I'm so thankful that it took a farm that was falling apart to "flip my Lean switch." This helped me see all the waste in my life and how much potential for improvement existed. Lean is not a tool, it is not a methodology, it is a way of living your life to its fullest potential.



# NORTHERN IRELAND



## TOM HUGHES

LUMEN ELECTRONICS PARTNER • GEMBADOCS CO-FOUNDER • AUTHOR

---

Paul Akers completely changed my view of Lean and to some extent life with his book *2 Second Lean*.

Before *2 Second Lean*, I had almost 3 decades of high level, international supply chain experience. I even had 10 years working in the automotive supply chain which is the sectoral home of Lean. I had worked directly with Toyota, Nissan, Ford, GM, and all the other big boys. But, in spite of all that, and not being a stupid man, I still didn't properly understand Lean until I read *2 Second Lean*.

Before *2 Second Lean*, I saw Lean as a great bunch of tools and techniques, super effective, but dry, uninspiring and frankly a little boring. Not something I'd get satisfaction out of doing anymore. I was far too senior for that!

I saw Lean as the domain of consultants, experts, graphs on the wall, flipcharts and workshops, something that was "done to" the shop floor. We would ask for the cooperation from the guys on the shop floor, but they never owned the process. They were consulted but, if I'm honest, I often felt that this was a manipulative way to implement changes by the engineers with little resistance. I saw Lean as complicated and sporadic, a real big effort that was super hard to sustain long term. Those graphs on the wall were something that the engineers or managers worried about and had no big concern to the guys on the line.



I started working with a local company on a company transformation, and on day 1 they said, “We want you to implement Lean.” I wasn’t exactly enthralled at the prospect. My initial reaction was “where is my team?” as I saw Lean as being driven from the top down by experts with limited participation from the shop. There would be 5S workshops, Key Performance Indicators to implement and maintain, lots of audits. Where was the resource for all that?



Thankfully, help was at hand. I contacted a local government agency that had a team who helped people with Lean. They visited the company and told me about a local firm called Seating Matters who were world class at Lean. They sent me a YouTube link with this guy, Paul Akers, doing a site tour. I was blown away. There was such an infectious energy about what was happening. They passed me on to Ryan Tierney who was a leader at Seating Matters. I sent him a WhatsApp and he replied, and we hit it off immediately. I couldn’t be more pleased with how helpful he was.

Within 48 hours, I had listened to the 2 *Second Lean* audiobook, and credit to myself I got it – Right The First Time! Here was the answer. I didn’t need a team. Instead, just myself and maybe 3 or 4 other people doing Lean, we would have the entire organization doing it. Total participation. I also felt super energised about what lay ahead of me. This wasn’t a series of workshops, filled with dry tools and techniques



or those damn graphs! This was about a culture change, real leadership, and *2 Second Lean* gave me the framework to drape my existing skillset. I had led company turnarounds all over the world, I really loved doing that and I knew that I was also very good at it, taking tired teams and re-energising them.

I went to see Ryan and the team at Seating Matters for a Lean Tour. WOW! The level of engagement was incredible from everyone, but there was an absolute standout moment when Ryan said to me, “Lean is just about growing people. We don’t worry about Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and all of that stuff. We focus on growing people and the rest just comes.” That gave me an even deeper understanding of where the focus should be. In the past I approached KPIs the opposite way. I’d always known that this was a little bit like driving a car by looking in the rear-view mirror, but this really helped me personally change my perspective as a leader.

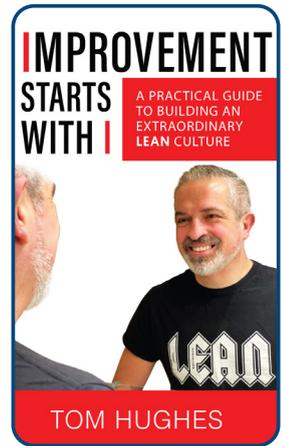
Within 6 weeks, I had the leadership team on board with the company transformation project. We were full steam ahead, doing Morning Meetings, daily 3S’ing, and improvement time. It wasn’t easy but it was so simple. Morning Meetings focused on learning to see waste, 3S’ing and improvement time. We focused on “Fixing What Bugs You” and creating a WhatsApp group to share the improvement videos and celebrating success. A totally virtuous circle!

After 5 months, we had improved productivity by 26%. We had external visitors come and see our progress and they were



blown away by the energy in the place. Particularly those who had experienced the “before.” The company is still doing the regular Morning Meetings and going on with their Lean journey. Since the advent of the Corona Virus, I have not been working with them, but I wish them all the best.

Due to the success of that transformation, I was asked to help out at other companies that wanted to get going with *2 Second Lean*. That experience, plus the 30 odd years of managing, caused significant change and led me to writing my own book *Improvement Starts With I*. Paul has endorsed and really supported it. And it is even available in audio on the Lean Play app that my software company built for Paul. Currently in English and Spanish, but soon to be available in German, Hindi and Dutch!



I now have my own business in partnership with my Lean Maniac friend, Patrick Magee at Lumen Electronics in Northern Ireland. This year shaping up to be three times as good by every measure compared to our first year. It's been a great ride and as if that wasn't enough, we created a "Fix What Bugs You" software product in GEMBADOCS that has now been widely adopted by the *2 Second Lean* community and in the Lean community as a whole. At the time of writing with 250+ customers in more than 25 countries! There is no better solution for managing Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) on the planet. We keep continuously improving to make it even better every day.

To conclude, as someone dear to me once said, "Tom, Lean is just Christ's teachings, dressed up in a business suit." With that I focus on giving, contributing, and not worrying too much about what's in it for me. Focusing on the better in every aspect of my life. Strangely enough, everything just keeps getting better from work, to family, and friends.

My life has changed for the better in every single aspect since I first encountered *2 Second Lean* and Paul Akers, and you know what? I have the feeling that we are just getting started. I will always be grateful for that, and I am very proud to call Paul Akers a friend.



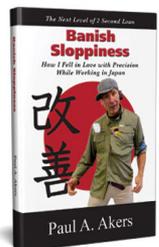
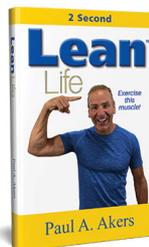
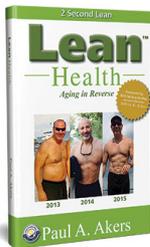
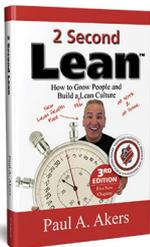
# IMPACT

*10 years of 2 Second Lean.*

*Please enjoy this collection of real stories from people around the world, sharing the powerful IMPACT of 2 Second Lean.*



Get hooked on Lean!



Read about Paul's Lean journey and how he applied these principles to other aspects of his life. Keep an eye out for his next Lean book at [paulakers.net](http://paulakers.net)!

Check out our YouTube page, with over 2,000 free videos and over 4 million views

Paul Akers is founder and president of FastCap LLC, an international product development company located in Bellingham, WA. For Paul's full bio, type or click the link below.

[paulakers.net/bio](http://paulakers.net/bio)