

Lean Applications in Sales

*How a Sales Manager Applied
Lean Tools to Sales Processes and
Exceeded His Goals*

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Abstract

Over the past decade Lean methods and tools have helped manufacturing organizations improve their productivity levels significantly by focusing on data, systematic elimination of waste, and improvement of flow. Today many nonmanufacturing organizations are applying the powerful process improvement methods and tools employed with Lean techniques. Organizations in health care, education, government, hospitality, and other services are applying the improvement tools with growing levels of success.

Sales people around the world have watched their organizations improve their core value-added processes, and yet they have not fully engaged or embraced the use of Lean tools in their sales processes. In fact, we've heard several disturbing comments from sales teams such as "Lean won't work in our area, we're too dynamic." And "Six Sigma analyses will just slow us down; we work more on sales instincts here."

While these comments are believed to be true by some sales teams, other sales teams that have used the Lean methods and tools are finding significant improvement opportunities, and they believe that if their "instincts" were good, before the application of these tools, they are even better after the application.

Lean tools are in their most basic sense process improvement tools. Dr. Deming indicated that if one's work cannot be defined as a process, there can be no standardization, and the resultant variation in outcomes will be unacceptable. Sales and sales management are simply a series of processes, which once defined can be continually improved with the application of Lean methods and tools to eliminate wastes and improve flow and speed. While it is true that many sales processes involve the "human element" and relationship building in customer decision making, process improvement tools will help make a good sales person or team better.

This book illustrates lean methods and tools applications applied to a full range of sales organizations and processes. By covering these tools in various sales environments in a story book format, sales team leaders can begin to understand how these methods and tools can be applied in their organizations. Through a unique and easy reading story of a frustrated sales team leader, discovering the power of these tools, the authors present a compelling argument to begin using Lean in sales organizations. This

story illustrates the discovery, application, and transformation of sales processes.

Sales managers and sales team leaders will benefit from this book by developing a clear understanding of why and how improvement tools such as Lean can be used to improve their organizations. The authors demonstrate in this book how key components of Lean apply to sales organizations and processes. The authors demonstrate how the proper use of these simple and effective tools can drive sales organizations continuing efforts to identify and reduce waste, improve performance, and speed delivery.

Keywords

continuous improvement, Lean, Lean Sigma, sales, sales management, Six Sigma, waste elimination

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