

This extension of the “Doctor’s Orders” insight is approximately 450 words.

Additional reading time: < 2 minutes

Value: Still priceless!

You can have a similarly healthy approach to lean, and six sigma, enjoying process improvements while letting the fresh air in for the creative elements in your organization:

1. Recognize that *all* aspects of your business require some license for creativity and experimentation. Variability may introduce uncertainty and cost, but lack of creativity makes you a monochromatic company in a technicolor world. Your challenge is to create an environment where talented, innovative personnel thrive. Some thoughts on surmounting this challenge are included in the [“Smarten Up”](#) whitepaper many of you have read.
2. Protect processes highly dependent on variability and creativity. Understanding customers and developing programs, communications and products which meet their needs requires a level of freedom unnecessary on the shop floor. I am not suggesting process is antithetical to innovation—prolific inventors like Thomas Edison and Ben Franklin have unequivocally proven the benefit of marrying creative thought to structured thinking. Process-happy organizations (which include most I have recently encountered) must dial back the restraints to restore balance.
3. Tie all activities back to the customer. The cure for cost-control run amok is a comprehensive model of your business which links every action, decision and initiative to customers’ buying decisions. Cost savings achieved by “leaning out” your distribution system no longer seem so attractive when your model predicts a deleterious effect on sales.
4. Remember that quantum leaps in meeting customer needs can initially look like foreign objects threatening a smooth system, and the more an activity hits an unmet opportunity, the more likely it will appear a variant which needs to be squashed. The odd blade of grass growing faster than its neighbors and the sprouting crocus look the same: they are both outside the regulated height of the

lawn and both will get lopped off by a blindly operated mower. You must accept safeguards to recognize the flower, by allowing more human interventions even though these necessarily slow down (and increase the cost of) your systems.

5. Collaborate to bring in more innovation or more process orientation, depending on your need. According to a recent study, almost 60% of CEOs are dissatisfied with their company's innovation efforts. Most of those dissatisfied leaders have not looked enough to the outside (vendors, partners, etc.) for creativity while they keep their eyes on the process improvement ball. Similarly, too few have outsourced processes so they can preserve innovation. Sony, for instance, subcontracts most of its manufacturing so it can concentrate on innovation and design.

Obese, wasteful parts of your company are prime candidates for money saving approaches. But don't forget: the leanest and most fat-free organization will still lose business to competitors who have creatively determined a better way to satisfy customers.

I hope you enjoyed this issue of **Insight**. Please call me to have an in-depth discussion on how to obtain better results in your company.

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See David's latest article in *IndustryWeek*, "[Stop Looking at Your Navel](http://www.industryweek.com/ReadArticle.aspx?ArticleID=14158)" <
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Listen to David being interviewed by the [Better Process Podcast](http://www.podcasternews.com/programs/87/better-process-podcast/4133/) (Please "Digg" the podcast when you listen to it) <<http://www.podcasternews.com/programs/87/better-process-podcast/4133/>>

Members of the IACCM can [listen to David](http://ascendantconsulting.com/resources/iaccm.mp3) being interviewed by Executive Director, Tim Cummins <<http://ascendantconsulting.com/resources/iaccm.mp3>>

Keep your eyes open for David's upcoming articles in *The Journal of the American Management Association*, *IndustryWeek*, and *Leader's Edge* magazine.
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