

Good morning everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute, bringing you this session of Digging Deeper. Today I want to talk about a book that I picked up at the AGC Convention a few weeks back before social distancing was today's norm. Anyway, kind of a surprising book. Read it, it was a quick read. It's called The Lean Builder, and I really recommend everybody get a copy, not just for yourself but for really every project manager and superintendent in your business.

Now, I know many of you may not be believers in lean or you're skeptics of lean, and then others of you of course, are all in. What I want to say to you is that, regardless of whether you're a believer or not, some of the basics in this book will apply to the things that you should be doing in the field, you should be doing on every job. And I think as much as any book I've read about construction so far, you're going to get a lot out of it.

One of the things that that occurred to me, in reading this book and our current situation is we have a lot of jobs that have been put on hold for a period of time or may end up starting late, not during the pandemic or waiting till we're done with that. So, at that time, of course some of these jobs are still going to have deadlines that you're trying to meet, even if it's impossible to meet, and you're going to need to have compressed scheduling. And it occurred to me the lessons of lean building, particularly the pole planning and the collaborative scheduling and the whole last planner regime will apply very much to jobs that you've got to get back on track in this time coming up.

The second thing I want to talk about with this book, The Lean Builder, is really what struck me even more so than its value for everybody, was how it applies to leadership in general and management in general. And, it really is amazing the lean principles. If you started with the basic pole plan, I'm sure everybody's heard of pole planning now, but if you start with the basic pole plan and you think of your company's strategic plan that you may have in place, the principles of a pole plan really apply to that. You're setting a goal out here in the future and you're creating the steps that will get you to that goal. And along the way to that goal, you have the opportunity apply several other principles from lean planning. One is the principal of last planner.

When you try to put together and implement a strategic plan, you can't really implement the whole thing from the top down. You have to not only have buy-in, but you really want teams working on various initiatives. And as you go down into the organization, there are folks that are better at doing some of those things and understanding the timelines around those things and what it takes to implement those initiatives than the leaders at the top sometimes. So, by involving those and getting those folks to put together sort of the game plan for your various initiatives, really can help you get those implemented and help you achieve your goals in the long run.

The next thing I wanted to talk about that's in the lean system is the importance of commitment. When you get commitments from people to accomplish something, to accomplish a task or to get something done, it's much more likely to get done and get done on time than when you don't have that commitment. And that's really a key aspect to the whole lean system. Is getting the commitments from people on the job site for, how many people they're going to have, what progress they're going to have, what milestones are going to reach and by what times.

And the same thing again applies to your company planning. If you get the commitments of your people, your team members, your team leaders to get these things accomplished, you're much more able to stay on track in your strategic planning.

The next item that I found in the lean system that applies to your planning is the scorecard. So, in lean planning, you keep a scorecard of how people are keeping their commitments, how they're staying on track with their timelines and their mileposts and things like that. And that helps you keep the thing moving and also to be able to make adjustments as you go along the way.

They also have something called a 12-week snapshot. And again, that 12 weeks snapshot, if you think about quarterly planning, to make your five-year plan work, that's exactly what you need. You need to take it in bite sized chunks, need to be able to look at it in a timeframe where you can make accomplishments and you can make progress and you can see progress. That 12-week snapshot also seem to apply to the major company planning just as well.

And finally, one of the last parts I wanted to talk about is the eight wastes that they identify in the lean planning. As I looked through each of those eight wastes, and if you're looking at your organization today, probably all of those eight wastes are in force at some place in your organization. And thinking about those eight wastes might help you to become more efficient, more effective, utilize your technology better, make your people more productive than even happier as you go along. So that's just another aspect to look at.

So, the next time you think about lean building, think about it not only as a way to operate your job sites, but as a way to run your business and achieve your long term and annual plans that you put together. And again, so the book is The Lean Builder, highly recommend that you read it and that you pass it out to your team members.

Again, this is Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute. Thanks for tuning in to Digging Deeper.