



...solve thorny business challenges in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

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To unlock greater profits in your business, should you work harder or smarter?

As business leaders and managers, we can all be guilty of 'being busy at being busy'. There is simply lots to do!

This sense of work overload can make it even more frustrating (and possibly infuriating) when you're told that you should be working 'smarter' and not 'harder'.

So, what are the practical, proven insights on how you and your business can work smarter and, as a result, improve your profitability?

Seek inspiration....

Let's turn to the world's most successful car manufacturer for inspiration.

To be clear, the Toyota Production System is not just about manufacturing cars – it's about a **Lean** working culture. It's about *continuous improvement* and *respect for people*.

These are the two pillars that underpin the working culture at Toyota, and it's this Lean culture that delivers world-beating results – results that you can achieve as well.

For decades, Toyota have made cars with the **lowest person-hours, least inventory** and **highest quality**. Toyota's approach has inspired teachers, pharmacies, insurance companies, restaurants, retailers and many other manufacturers and



service businesses to master the art and science of Lean management.

"Lean is all about taking a process – any process – and removing anything from it that doesn't add value... Lean is about growing and developing people."

– Ryan Tierney, *Seating Matters CEO, Northern Ireland*

Like Toyota, Ryan Tierney sees continuous improvement and respect for people as the two pillars that underpin the Lean working culture in his business, Seating Matters.

As a consequence of a Lean approach, a number of things improve:

1. **Team engagement** – because the team actively participate in improving their jobs.
2. **Productivity** – because lots of small improvements compound over time.
3. **Quality** – because your process

improvement reduces and prevents errors.

4. **Speed** – because you remove barriers to the flow of work through your business.
5. **Costs** – because you reduce waste in many small ways over time.
6. **"My hair's on fire" overload** – this reduces because you achieve a stronger sense of confidence and certainty about work being done as planned, to the right standard to meet your customers' expectations.

Understandably, as a result of these 6 improvements, the profitability of your business should see noticeable improvement too – just as it has at Seating Matters. (There is more information about Seating Matters and how they've have successfully implemented a Lean working culture in the download tools.)

Teachers adopt Lean...

The new headteacher of a local school introduced himself to his teaching staff. He then asked them a question:

“What one thing is making your job harder than it should be?”

Almost in unison, the teachers replied:

“Classroom keys!”

Every teacher had regularly experienced a locked classroom. For each locked room, they estimated that 10 minutes were wasted at the start of lessons, and that this typically happened for around 20 lessons a week. All because the caretaker had the only set of keys!

By issuing each teacher with a set of keys, they clawed back 200 minutes of teaching time a week. In a 13-week term, that meant 43 hours a term more teaching time per class. With 30 pupils per class, that's nearly 1,300 hours of student learning no longer wasted each term.

You too can adopt a Lean working culture and gain a competitive advantage. Or will you allow your competitors to benefit first from Lean thinking?

IN A NUTSHELL:

See Lean management as a way to improve the working culture of your business and you'll see many small improvements and experience greater pride in your business. The financial performance you want to achieve will follow.

Where do you find all these improvements?

You don't.

Your people find the improvements.

You encourage and support them 100% to find the improvements in the work they do, and then you encourage them to take action. (See information below on stage managing this process.)

You are Lean job 1...

Without your zeal, commitment and encouragement for creating a Lean working culture, you'll fall at the first or second difficulty you encounter.

Finding and **nurturing your energy and passion for a Lean working culture** will set the scene for your team

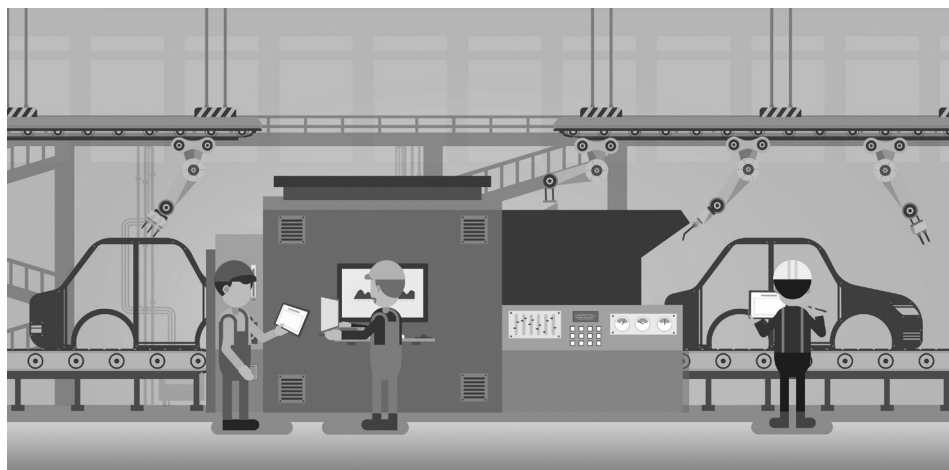
to follow through with you – but only when they see that you're serious, you're committed, you're in it for the long haul.

NB The books referenced below and in the download tools and resources have been created to feed your motivation and skill at implementing a Lean working culture.

Small is beautiful...

“...by encouraging a culture in which people had the freedom to make small improvements, we created a habitat where big improvements could emerge and flourish.”

– **Ryan Tierney, Seating Matters, Northern Ireland**



Of course, we all want to find the silver bullet change that will transform our results. However, big improvements are rare and, as Ryan suggests, the culture you create, the habits you create and the processes you create to support small changes are what can uncover or unlock the bigger changes.

A PROVEN SOLUTION FOR YOU...

Work with your team to manage the 8 sources of improvement (8 wastes) and you'll build a Lean working culture and, as a result, build a more profitable business.

If you can't see waste, you can't improve it...

Recognising waste as something more than the physical waste in a bin is needed.

“Waste is anything that doesn't add value to your customer.”

A good question to use is:

“Is my customer willing to pay for what I'm doing right now?”

If they're not willing to pay, you can see there's an improvement to make.

Think of a trip to the barbers or hairdressers – what exactly adds value to you, the customer?

- Washing adds value
- Cutting adds value
- Styling adds value

What doesn't add value can also be seen. For example, I regularly see my barber searching through the different blades scattered on her table – wasting time and damaging the blades.

Stage managing your Lean process...

- Help your people **SEE the waste** – consider customer value in the light of the 8 wastes listed below
- Encourage your people to **ELIMINATE the waste** – because you're committed and passionate
- SHOW the improvement** – video the working process before and after to demonstrate the improvement achieved. Make the improvement tangible and visible.

8 wastes to see...

“Waste lurks beneath the surface of every process. You've just got to help everyone see that. That's how you generate ideas for waste reduction.”

– **Ryan Tierney, Seating Matters, Northern Ireland**

As you consider each of these 'waste' examples, write down what this might look like in your own business:

1. **Over-production waste** – doing more or making more than is needed.

A carvery bar slices more meat at lunchtime than they need to. A taxi firm sends an 8-seater to collect 2 passengers.

2. **Transportation waste** – moving products or equipment around unnecessarily.

Walking to the corner of the office to collect from the printer. Carrying one box at a time from the store, instead of using a trolley to bring them all together at the same time.

3. **Inventory waste** – unnecessary levels of stock or work in progress (WIP).

Steel is stockpiled for a few forecast orders and uses up valuable storage space for more regular orders. Projects are started but are not finished on time, building up WIP that can't be invoiced.

4. **Defect waste** – poor customer service or 'not-fit-for-purpose' products are produced.

A fitted kitchen needs rework when being installed because measurements and patterns were inaccurate. A manager fails to ask the right questions at a job interview and unqualified people are recruited, necessitating excess training or having to dismiss people who can't do the work.

5. **Motion waste** – unnecessary movement of workers that does not add value.

Are there too many steps needed to set up a new client? Can essential forms and files be quickly found on the computer?

6. **Over-processing waste** – repeated action that adds no value to a product or service for the end customer.

An apprentice chef finely chops vegetables that could be roughly chopped. A 30-page report is produced when a short 2-page executive summary would have sufficed.

7. **Unnecessary waiting waste** – people stop working because they are waiting for something.

Teachers are waiting for keys to unlock a classroom. Staff wait for a manager to arrive so they can start or finish their shift. A colleague waits for you to finish your job before they start working.

8. **Waste of skills** – failing to make the best use of people's talents and abilities.

An enthusiastic team member who is capable of leading and managing is locked into processing work. An introverted, detail-orientated person is sent on client visits and networking events.

Consider the value you provide to your customers, and then work out where you can reduce waste to become leaner. Reduce waste, and you drive up profits, pride and passion for your business.

Remember, a Lean working culture is relevant to every business, and to teachers as well! That's why you find Lean being taught at Oxford University, Cranfield Business School, Harvard and all leading business schools around the world.

Help your team lead the Lean culture...

Toyota is famous for its rigorous involvement of staff in improving processes and reducing waste – and you can do this too. Involve your people – respect the people doing the work – and recognise them as the best source of continuous improvement.

If you don't involve your team, you'll be wasting the valuable insights of your people. They are closest to the work and best placed to identify waste and implement improvements – but only if you encourage them and give them autonomy to make the changes.

Please check out the '3S' podcast from Ryan Tierney – *Sort; Sweep; Standardise* – in the download tools to see how you can involve your team more and encourage (small) continuous improvement every day.

Morning improvement – 20 minutes every day

*"Before we introduced improvement time... there was no time to implement great ideas. Improvements ended up getting shoved to one side for another time, but another time never came."
– Ryan Tierney, Seating Matters, Northern Ireland*

The '3S' process mentioned above helps focus your team, and starting

the day focused on improvement rather than productivity builds momentum towards your Lean working culture.

Seven hours invested in productivity and 20 or 30 minutes invested in improvement secures the future success of your business.

STOP – thinking and focusing on **productivity** all day and every day.

START – thinking and focusing on **improvement** for 20 or 30 minutes every day.

TIME TO DISAGREE:

"Why would we run a morning meeting every day when we could be doing productive, profit-making work instead?"

It's a good question. The source of your results on a weekly or annual basis is the amount of work you do each day. So, it makes sense to do more work today, just as you have always done.

However, maintaining your results, growing your results over time and securing your future results depends on you getting better at the work you do. Standing still in a changing world could be described as commercial self-destruction.

Investing 7 hours a day on productive work makes sense. Investing just 20-30 minutes a day to ensure your future success also makes sense.

And if 20 minutes daily seems too intense, why not start by factoring reducing waste into one of your team's weekly priorities?

"We run a really efficient business, and we don't need to manage waste."

As you'd expect, Toyota run a really efficient business too. As does Ryan Tierney.

And despite being efficient already after years of Lean management activity, Toyota is constantly looking for ways to continue to reduce waste. Continuous improvement is a river of improvement. It keeps flowing – there's no end to it.

GET YOUR BITESIZE SUPPORT TOOLS NOW

<https://businessbreakthrough.online/work-smarter-with-lean-tools-and-resources/>

Why not ask your team the question used by the headteacher and see what they suggest.

What one thing is making your job harder than it should be?"

ULTIMATE ARGUMENT:

"Getting the buy-in from my people can be hard work – I'm not sure they'll go for adding more work to their schedule."

Securing team engagement can be tough. And yet, of all things, continuous improvement can be the easiest way to

get their buy-in. After all, you're talking about making their job easier and more pleasant.

Your team will want to deliver more value to your customers because customer satisfaction secures their job and their future.

Remember how a small interruption and a small change can have a big impact? All the headteacher did to create a leaner (less wasteful) teaching process was to get his teachers to STOP for a little while – and then get some keys cut! They got team buy-in.

Tell me more...

Lean thinking has profoundly changed thousands of businesses, charities and other organisations, thanks to Toyota sharing their Lean insights in many books. Russell Watkins has worked for and with Toyota, JCB and other UK businesses helping implement Lean.

His book, *Adventures in Leanland*, provides some brilliant examples and insights into making your business a lean and profitable one.

Ryan Tierney and his team have transformed their furniture business into a world-class operation that has prompted business leaders from Japan, the USA, and Europe to visit his company in Northern Ireland. His book, *LEAN Made Simple*, is a must-read for inspiration and practical next steps.



More tools and information for you:

As well as the checklist here, there are a number of useful exercises and tools in the online supporting material. Together they'll help you make more of this Bitesize Business Breakthrough.

4 helping hands for you...



Building a Lean working culture, if we're to follow Toyota's lead as Ryan Tierney has done, means a focus on continuous improvement and a respect for people.

Here are 4 helping hands to get you started:

1. **STOP** thinking **productivity** and start thinking **improvement** – build your passion, energy and time commitment to your Lean working culture.
2. Help your people see value from your customer's perspective and thus **SEE the waste** – using 20 minutes of improvement time every day to seek waste out. Help your team answer the question – "What one thing is making your job harder than it should be?"
3. Help, encourage and support your team to **ELIMINATE the waste** – they are closest to the work and will have ideas on simple, practical, short-term low-cost ways to improve things.
4. **SHOW the change** – When your people start to see small improvements across your business, momentum will build around your Lean working culture. Share your before and after videos for everyone to see.

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Use these tools and resources to discover how to manage the 8 sources of improvement in your business and build a lean and smarter way of working for you and your team.

FOR MORE EDITIONS OF BUSINESS BREAKTHROUGHS, PLEASE GO TO:
<https://businessbreakthrough.online/library>

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