

Drop your smokescreen

If you are willing to change your thinking, you can change your feelings. If you can change your feelings, you can change your actions. And by changing your actions – based on good thinking – you can change your life...

Sanjeev Baitmangalkar

Imagine a company XYZ turned over 100 crore three years ago and made a profit of 10 per cent, which is 10 crore. Consider that 50 per cent of the sale value in their product is material cost. During the past three years the company grew by approximately 35 per cent and achieved a turnover of 250 crore. At the same rate of profits, the company should have made 25 crore, which may happen because of the demand and supply equation in the surged market condition or can be less probable because, discrete thinking about growth is 'doing more of the same', and the pitfall in such thinking in the face of competition, is price cuts. Had XYZ changed strategy to lean manufacturing and taken the route of improving productivity by eliminating wastes, the possibility is that they would have ended up with many times more profits, irrespective of their achieved profits. Compound the lost profits over past

years and it will tell you where you could have gone. Turnover growth, if measured with growth in productivity and profits (together), not only makes more sense but also is more holistic. Can you see then, what difference such an organisation can do to the society,

community, stakeholders, and partners? So, how should you be thinking? Discrete, or lean? So, while growing significantly in turnover has XYZ really profited or has actually lost? 'Where profit is, loss is near by', says a Japanese proverb.

Values of good thinking

In our everyday life we deal with things that are exciting as well as things that are mundane. We deal with situations that benefit us and causes that affect us. We are forced to deal with the complex variables of life. When the going is good, we take credit. When the going gets tough we ask 'why God, why me?' or find somebody or something to blame it on. In short no matter what, we put out our thinking and attitude on display.

Benjamin Disraeli the great philosopher once said, 'Nurture great thoughts, for you will never go higher than your thoughts'. Look at all the successful people (or organisations) in the world, what do they have in common? What is that one thing that separates those who go to the top and those who never get there? 'It's good thinking'. If you are willing to change your thinking, you can change your feelings. If you can change your feelings, you can change your actions. And by changing your actions – based on good thinking – you can change your life.

All of us want our children to be educated in the best schools and

"There is little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative."

- Clement Stone



colleges. I am not undermining the importance of good education. But the problem with most educational institutions is that they try to teach people 'what' to think, and not 'how' to think. 'Knowledge is power' - said Francis Bacon. But knowledge has value only in the hands of someone who has the ability to think well. We must learn how to think well and reach our potential.

Why should you embrace the value of good thinking? David Schwartz, professor of Georgia State University and the author of 'The magic of thinking big', says 'Where success is concerned, people are not measured in inches or pounds or college degrees or family background; they are measured by the size of their thinking'. Becoming a better thinker is worth your effort because the way you think really impacts every aspect of your life (or business). It doesn't matter who or what you are, good thinking will improve your life. It will make you a better businessman, parent, teacher, executive or whatever you are.

Let me tell you of a few reasons why good thinking is important:

Good thinking creates the foundation for good results

- Remember James Allen's words "good thinking can never produce bad results; bad thoughts and actions can never produce good results". You understand this in the natural world, but try to understand this in the mental and moral world, and cooperate with it. Poor thinking can produce only negative results, average thinking produces no result, and good thinking produces some progress, but great thinking produces great progress. You cannot change your results without changing your thinking. Remember the proverb 'as you sow, so you reap.' If you need great results, you need to sow great thinking. Why do you think you fall short of achieving your complete dreams? It's because you are trying to change your results without changing your thinking. The best way to develop good thinking is by surrounding yourself with it. How? You may ask. By reading positive attitude books, listening

to positive thinking tapes and being amongst people who have developed the ability to think positive. In the current scenario of the manufacturing world, great idea is all about adding greater customer value, and great thinking is all about 'lean thinking'.

Good thinking increases your potential

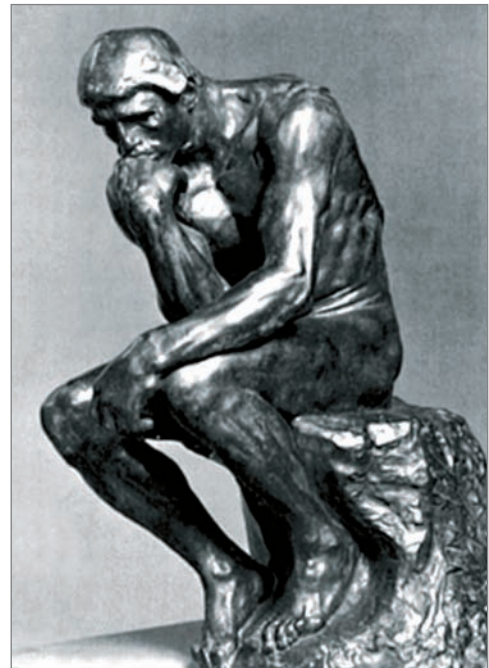
- In every way each of us is a leader - to our family, to our business, in our community, in our social environment, in our profession, etc. You will become as small as your controlling desire or as great as your dominant aspiration (eg, becoming lean, adding more value or making more profits). You are that person as you think in your heart. Our leadership ability determines our level of effectiveness (the difference between reasons and actions). The lid on your leadership ability is low if you are a poor thinker and that lid is high if you are a great thinker.

Good thinking produces more good thinking 'if' you make it a habit

- Thinking cannot solve the problems we face today, in the same way we thought while creating them. Look around you the world keeps getting more complicated. It doesn't have to discourage you.

I am your greatest companion. I am your greatest helper or heaviest burden. I will push you onward or drag you down to failure. I am completely at your command. Half of the things you do you might as well just turn over to me and I will be able to do them quickly and correctly. I am easily managed - you must merely be firm with me. Show me exactly how you want something done and after a few lessons I will do it automatically.

I am the servant of all great men; and alas, of all failures as well. Those who are great, I have made



great. Those who are failures, I have made failures. I am not a machine, though I work with all the precision of a machine plus the intelligence of a man. You may run me for profit or run me for ruin. – it makes no difference to me. Take me, train me, be firm with me, and I will place the world at your feet. Be easy with me and I will destroy you. Who am I? I am 'habit'!

Your problem is not your problem

If you are not a 'lean manufacturing' company; and you are told by those who have done the lean journey; that you could cut your lead-times by 50–90 per cent, reduce cycle times by 60–90 per cent, reduce inventory in excess of 50 per cent, that you can achieve an over 99 per cent on-time delivery, over 90 per cent improvement in quality, reduce your existing floor space usage by 40–75 per cent, achieve 5–15 per cent reduction in material cost, get overall cost reduction of 25–50 per cent and a huge growth in profits from doubling to well over ten times or more from your current levels. What and how would you think about these factual experiences of lean manufacturing companies? Good and positive thinking in the best long

term interest of your customers, society and stake holders would naturally be to transform from being discrete to becoming lean, irrespective and despite your current situation. Yes, you will have to kick the current habits. Change is more about building a new culture and much less about mechanical adjustments.

What then is the portrait of a good thinker? How do you pay the price to become a

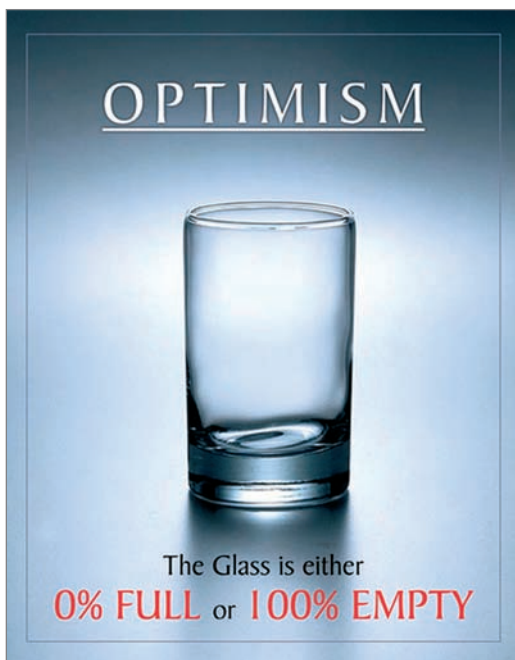
good thinker? How does it affect your strategic decisions and actions in the manufacturing world? In my opinion there are many thinking pieces to become a great achiever.

If you think 'we are doing lean' because you either have been told to maintain a two bin part system by your customer, or you are doing Kaizens in isolation, or working on 5S in isolation, or have laid out your shop in cells, or your customer has taught you how to draw maps for his orders; then chances are you may have got some localised results that may not be quantifiable on your balance sheet, because in reality you are not lean. You crave to be part of that elite club, but you really are not.

If you are thinking 'we have some major issues to resolve now and we will start lean manufacturing after we have overcome these issues'. You should be thinking, am I going to be stuck here or will I get some help and move on? Hey wake up, your organisation is human and dynamic, and you are never going to be without problems in the discrete environment. Your problem will only present a different face everyday, because it has never gone away, its living there and growing too! 'We have a problem. Congratulations! But it's a tough problem. Then double congratulations!' writes W Clement Stone, the renowned philanthropist and businessman. Greater the problem better can be the solution. Remember, 'whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve'.

When you think, 'we will organise our systems better first and then start lean manufacturing'. Remember, thinking will not overcome fear, but action will. Chances are that your systems will always fall short and you will continue to be stuck in your mire of problems. Be careful of your verbal utterances, as you will send them into your subconscious mind and those thoughts will rule your actions. Your results will be different to what you desire.

Thinking such as, 'I am ready and want to implement lean manufacturing



system, but my people are not ready'. The need for transformation from discrete to lean is usually a decision made at the top of the organisation. It's a leadership decision. Allowing such thoughts could be the leaders shortcoming. If you have no lean experience and try to convince others, understand this – you cannot. Good thinking would be to invite an experienced Sensei (lean teacher) to introduce the subject, and discuss your fears with him. He will be the right person to encourage you.

When the thinking is 'I am interested, I will start lean manufacturing, this is my man who will do it'. Lean transformation is more about culture and less about logic and mechanical adjustments.

The culture starts with you at the top. With this kind of thinking you will have difficulties getting off the starting block and not knowing where to begin. Good thinking would be to seek assistance from a good Sensei. A good Sensei is one

who has lead and succeeded with changing 'culture' (this usually is done from the CEO position) at one or more places. Such a Sensei is your best partner because he's been there and done that.

He has not merely travelled the journey, but has chartered the course, weathered the storm and sailed the ship safely to its destination. This is the most important part in the process to lean transformation and is integral with the 'philosophy'. Many who claim expertise, as a Sensei may be useful with

implementing the core disciplines only (mechanical adjustments), which is only the first phase in lean

transformation, from their experience as department or value stream managers at their place of work. And with Power Point presenters who copy cat from published materials, you may end up paying the money without getting results.

If you think, 'We are busy with other things now, we will start lean manufacturing after Diwali'. Chances are

I think I can!
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 I think I can!
 I think I can!
 I think I can!

you never will. Remember, 'now' is the best time to make a new beginning. All achievements start in the mind of the individual. The first step is to know exactly what your problem, goal or desire is. If you don't you will be finding new excuses each time.

When you think, 'I am looking at Six Sigma now ...' and you are in the position of the CEO or senior manager in your organisation having attended seminars and listened to stories of lean successes, you need to drop your resistance. You already know that Six Sigma and lean are entirely different things (read 'Lean or Six Sigma' in the March 2007 issue of MMT). If you drop your smoke screen and think objectively you will benefit.

There could be hoards of other thinking such as; 'I want to first get my ISO, then organise my materials and manufacturing and then go in for lean', or 'our priorities are different right now', or 'our customer is teaching us about mapping for his components', or 'I don't think I will make much more profit', or 'it is too expensive to be assisted by a Sensei' and so on. Think again. Think you can, think you can't; think you will, think you won't; think you want to, think you don't want to; whichever way you think you are right because that is what you will get. Your actions will always mirror your

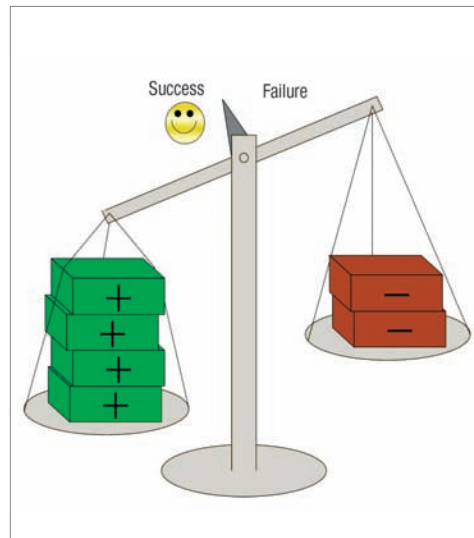


thoughts. Your thoughts will lead your actions; your actions will fetch your results. As you think, so you reap. Whatever your fears, disbeliefs or misunderstandings to transform the 'Toyota' way, good thinking would be to discuss your thoughts with an experienced Sensei and seek the correct guidance.

Bringing it home

How does one shift from a negative thought pattern to a positive one? Here are some tips I learnt from great authors, teachers and preachers such as Peale, Maxwell, Og Mandino, Les Brown, Anthony Robins and Dr Schuler, etc that you too can use

- For the next 24 hours deliberately speak hopefully about everything – your work, your family, your health, your subordinates, your boss, your colleagues and friends, your future, the future of your company, business outlook, etc. In short, speak optimistically about everything. If you are habituated to talk pessimistically you will find this difficult, and by using your will power, you must do it anyway. If you can do it for one full day, no matter how bad your situation, you would have won step one
- After speaking hopefully for at least twenty-four hours, continue to practice it for at least one week. When you do this you will be realistic for about a day or two. The meaning of realistic here is the 'dawning of optimism'. When most people say they are being realistic they delude themselves because they are simply being negative
- You must feed your mind even as you feed your body, and to make your mind healthy, you must feed it with good, nourishing and wholesome thoughts. Therefore, now and today start to shift your mind to positive thinking
- Have faith in the process. Affirming positive thoughts will help
- From your galaxy of friends and acquaintances identify those who always think positively and deliberately



cultivate his or her or their company. Don't abandon your negative friends but get closer to the positive thinking ones. When you have absorbed their spirit, you can go back and give your negative friends your newly acquired thought pattern

- Avoid an argument, but whenever a negative attitude is expressed, oppose it with a positive and optimistic opinion. It is said, 'God cannot give you any greater blessing than you can believe in'. Affirming through the power of prayer is a powerful process, and if you have faith in the process ... nothing shall be impossible.

The good news here is no matter how complicated life gets or how difficult problems may seem; good thinking can make a difference – if you make it a consistent part of your life. Success comes to those who habitually do things that unsuccessful people don't do. The more you engage in good thinking, the more good thoughts you will continue to think. It's like creating an army of good ideas capable of achieving almost anything. Every one of you has the potential to become a good thinker. Remember – unsuccessful people focus their thinking on survival, average people focus their thinking on maintenance, and successful people focus their thinking on progress. Where would you like to belong?

A question only you can answer. **MMT**



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