

1 of 1 DOCUMENT

Graphic Arts MONTHLY

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The Best Work at Getting Better

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Being the best at anything requires a willingness to continuously improve. Competitors use leaders as a benchmark with which to compare themselves and constantly seek both incremental and fundamental means of improving their business to catch or surpass the leader.

Anyone at the top of the competitive heap must also improve or run the risk of losing their competitive advantage. Staying content with existing success is a sure path to complacency and eventual competitive disaster.

PIA/GATF is publishing a new book this summer, *Lean Printing: Pathway to Success* (written by this author and two of my peers at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA). This book is intended to both introduce and reinforce the principles of lean management as a methodology to help printers find those fundamental improvements and make their businesses better. It's available at Graph Expo and via the online bookstore: www.gain.net.

PIA/GATF is stepping up its focus on lean methodology in a couple of areas. At Graph Expo, Ken Rizzo, PIA/GATF director of consulting, is leading two lean-focused seminars. The first is on maximizing uptime through the practice of Total Productive Maintenance (TPM), one of the pillars of a lean implementation process geared to have equipment maintained and performing at optimal speeds. The use of Overall Equipment Effectiveness as a metric helps guide printers to better understand the causes and sources of unplanned downtime.

Rizzo is also presenting on Lean Strategies for Press Make-Ready Reduction. Reducing setup time is another key pillar of lean. Lean practitioners recognize that makereadies do not add value to a customer's product, and anything that does not add value is seen as waste. All waste-or non-value adding activities-require elimination in lean thinking.

For those who cannot make Graph Expo and want to learn more about lean, PIA/GATF is hosting three-day workshops at its Pittsburgh headquarters in late September. These sessions offer participants an overview of lean tools and an opportunity through in-class simulations to learn how to apply them in their business. A distinction is also made between simply using lean tools to improve and truly living, or becoming, lean through cultural change in the organization.

West Coast offering

Later in the year, Cal Poly is holding another of its renowned workshops on lean as well, for those who find travel to the West Coast more convenient. From Dec. 5-7, in San Luis Obispo, participants will be indoctrinated in lean thinking by the authors of PIA/GATF's new book in a workshop specifically designed for the print industry.

The pathway to success is not without a concerted effort to change and improve. Staying abreast of current thinking around improvement opportunities ensures complacency does not become a competitive trap for your firm. Whether you are the best, or are seeking to be the best, are you working hard enough to stay on success's path?

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