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# LEAN THOUGHTS

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## Managing People, your most valuable resource

When surveyed, most employees will tell you that it is acceptable to take 1 sick day per month off and that it should not have any repercussions. If this is tolerated by your organization you have automatically built in a ½ percent labour increase, not including the factoring in the additional cost of managing the disturbance, when the absence occurs and the impact on your other team members and production goals.

**Casual absenteeism is one daily surprise** each front-line manager does not look forward to each day. If his entire team shows up they feel the inner joy akin to winning a lottery and hope that they now stand a chance of meeting the daily goals. Granted in some cases, casual absenteeism is unavoidable ... but in many other's due to the lack of a true "**Adult to Adult**" environment, the "surprise" could have been avoided.

Many years ago a sensei coached me on the importance of managing attendance as a primary metric in the workplace. He advised me that there is a strong relationship between attendance, performance and quality. A poor attendee is normally a poor performer and a poor performer naturally generates poor quality. You can attack quality issues with poke yoke devices and many other quality tools but you still rely on the emotional attachment of the employee ... if you tend to attack "operator error" you will loose every time because as an organization you will have probably failed to provide sufficient training. Again, if you manage an employee around performance issues it will take months and potentially years to gather data ... only to be probably told by your human resource group that you have failed to provide is proper training or guidance. But, attendance is digital ... your team member is either there or they are not. Since being enlightened with this simple insight, it has proven time and time again to me to be a very solid formula.

Most organizations I know of have stealth programs to deal with attendance and performance issues that are usually known to the management team but out of sight to the rest of the organization ... probably to respect the privacy of the selected individual. This is wrong! Your organizational population knows who are the marginal team members within their flock, and constantly sub-consciously wonder why management is not dealing with the situation even if they are behind the scenes.

So make your attendance tracking visible ... it is not wrong you are just tracking another key performance indicator, just like you track and visibly post delivery and quality performance data. Initially all you need is a matrix sheet indicating employee names along the "X" axis with the option of including employee pictures ... along the "Y" axis squares for color coding the individual's attendance record. The color coding is simple ...

**GREEN = attended and stayed for full scheduled shift,**  
**YELLOW = arrived late or left early without prior notification,**  
**RED = did not show for scheduled shift** and finally  
**BLUE = approved absence.** Now let the games begin ...

Initially, you may get a negative reaction from your population about showing a visible tracking of individual attendance ... this is usually fuelled by those poor attendees ... but this will pass quickly. Supporting your visible tracking of attendance you need two critical supporting elements 1) an attendance policy and 2) a weekly commitment to meet with those that has a casual absenteeism the previous week.

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*Where "Lean Thoughts" Become Reality*



The following is an attendance policy that we have used in the past with great success that has a natural escalation policy which is easily understood and can be defended easily to any labour board. This policy will also help you create that "Adult to Adult" environment you desire.

Our policy was built around 7 occurrences within a rolling 12 months that ultimately would lead to termination and was clearly understood by all employees. Each week on Thursday commencing at 1pm we began meeting with employees that had a casual absenteeism occurrence the prior week. Each employee was paged to attend a meeting in the board room with the site manager, human resources and their direct supervisor. The following is how progressive meetings were managed;

**Meeting 1**, casual discussion with the employee on how they were missed and the impact their absence had on the organization. Insure that employee is OK and is there anything the organization can do to prevent any future potential absenteeism.

**Meeting 2**, More defined discussion about impact of casual absenteeism and potential career impact with the organization and if there is anything the organization can do to assist the employee attain and sustain perfect attendance.

**Meeting 3**, Concern about potential of work environment on the employee's health and a request that the employee meet with their doctor to review any health conditions that could prevent the employee from coming to work that we as an employer could adjust. We normally paid for the time it took the employee to meet with their doctor.

**Meeting 4**, Schedule a visit of the employee to have a health check with the company doctor to potentially identify reasons why the employee could be missing work due to work conditions.

**Meeting 5**, A review of all data and root cause analysis of why so many reoccurrences are happening. Develop an action plan with the employee for improvement.

**Meeting 6**, Review of previous meetings with the employee and concern that work environment may not be conducive to their health. Provide the employee with a paid day of reflection about whether are committed to perfect attendance to the organization. Upon return to work the employee must provide a written document on how they plan for perfect attendance or their decision to develop a separation agreement with the organization.

**Meeting 7**, Final review of meetings and introduction to outplacement service and severance package. Wish employee good luck with their future career.

As we coached the employees through this program we emphasized the importance of perfect attendance but acknowledged that

in some cases absenteeism could not be avoided, however in many cases pre-planning by both parties could minimize the impact on organizations. So if an employee advised us 5 working days in advance of pending doctor, lawyer, immigration appointments we would regard it as an approved absence with no dire consequences.

Building around this program we introduced a **team based attendance recognition** program. For each week that a team had perfect attendance each team member could select a \$5.00 per person voucher that could be redeemed at a local merchant for pizza, view a movie at a theatre or rent a video. It was amazing the simple power this reward did to generate peer pressure for attendance. Each week we could see the person that contributed to a team not having perfect attendance paying their fellow team mates the reward they missed. The cost of the reward if you are paying \$14.00 per hour is less than 1% and I personally guarantee this program will give you more than a 1% improvement in casual absenteeism reduction.

Try these simple and inexpensive tools and within a year you can probably eliminate the need of a time clock to validate that your team is arriving daily and on time ... you will have a respectful adult to adult environment. Remember, the socio-tech attributes are not necessary in the tools but how the team looks at how they are being consistently applied and feeling good about being part of an elite team. There is a reason why on average 1,000 people apply for every open position Toyota advertises.

In next week's newsletter we will discuss some other neat and simple tools to assist with your attendance management program like Bank Time and your role as a Greeter.

For more details and clarification about the programs written here please feel free to contact me at [kunst@kunstofsolutions.com](mailto:kunst@kunstofsolutions.com)

Consortium Event Schedule



Tour Workshop Conference

January	February	March	April	May	June
<p><b>T</b></p> <p>Wednesday 24 <u>Eaton Electrical</u>, contact Joe Fisher, <a href="mailto:JoeRFisher@eaton.com">JoeRFisher@eaton.com</a></p> <p><b>W</b></p> <p>La-Z-Boy Corporate Monroe MI February 14 &amp; 15 <u>Enterprise Value Stream Mapping</u> How to use the VSM tools to map admin processes. Contact Richard Kunst for info. <a href="mailto:Richard.kunst@la-z-boy.com">Richard.kunst@la-z-boy.com</a> Register at <a href="http://www.ame.org">www.ame.org</a></p>	<p><b>T</b></p> <p>Wednesday 14, <u>CFN Precision</u>, contact Paul Kaulback, <a href="mailto:pkaulback@cfn-inc.com">pkaulback@cfn-inc.com</a></p>	<p><b>T</b></p> <p>Wednesday 21, <u>Nestle Waters</u>, contact Mariela Castano <a href="mailto:mcastano@perriergroup.com">mcastano@perriergroup.com</a></p>	<p><b>T</b></p> <p>Wednesday 18, <u>CTS Corp.</u>, contact Bob Garces, <a href="mailto:Bob.Garces@ac.ctscorp.com">Bob.Garces@ac.ctscorp.com</a></p> <p><b>C</b></p> <p>Lean Design &amp; Development Conference Wed 18 to Fri 20 Chicago Contact <a href="http://www.iirusa.com/lean">www.iirusa.com/lean</a></p>	<p><b>T</b></p> <p>Wednesday 16, <u>Stackpole CSD</u>, contact Don Barber <a href="mailto:Don.Barber@stackpole.ca">Don.Barber@stackpole.ca</a></p> <p>Consortium Shareshowcase</p> <p>Saturday 05 <u>CGL Guelph</u>, Contact Cindy Grolleman <a href="mailto:Grolleman@canada.com">Grolleman@canada.com</a> or Dave Deskur <a href="mailto:daved@cglmfg.com">daved@cglmfg.com</a></p>	<p><b>T</b></p> <p>Wednesday 20, <u>Morrison LaMothe</u>, contact Tony Vita <a href="mailto:tvita@morrisonlamthe.com">tvita@morrisonlamthe.com</a></p> <p><b>C</b></p> <p>AME Regional Conference Mon 18 to Thur 21 Edmonton, Alberta Contact <a href="http://www.measureupforsuccess.com">www.measureupforsuccess.com</a></p>
July	August	September	October	November	December
		<p><b>T</b></p> <p>Wednesday 26, <u>Kraft Foods</u>, contact Hanif Jivraj <a href="mailto:hjivraj@Kraft.com">hjivraj@Kraft.com</a></p>	<p><b>T</b></p> <p>Wednesday 10, <u>CGL Manufacturing</u> contact Dave Deskur <a href="mailto:daved@cglmfg.com">daved@cglmfg.com</a></p> <p><b>C</b></p> <p>AME National Conference Mon 29 to Friday Nov 2 Chicago Contact <a href="http://www.ame.org">www.ame.org</a></p>	<p><b>T</b></p> <p>Wednesday 14, <u>Messier-Dowty</u>, contact Mike Smith <a href="mailto:Mike.Smith@Messier-dowty.on.ca">Mike.Smith@Messier-dowty.on.ca</a></p>	<p><b>T</b></p> <p>Wednesday 12, <u>Orenda</u>, contact Brenda McIntosh <a href="mailto:brendamcintosh@orenda.com">brendamcintosh@orenda.com</a></p>