

# Smelly Feet & DIY Shelving.

## Anecdotes from the War on Waste during the Journey Without End

Steve Harrison, John Crane

John Crane is the acknowledged world leader in the manufacture of engineered sealing solutions and supplies extensively to the oil, gas and pharmaceutical sectors, as well as the chemical, power, pulp, paper and water markets. By combining a truly comprehensive range of products with an innovative approach to the creation of new sealing solutions, the company has earned itself an enviable reputation for setting new standards of operational performance and reliability. This article has been drawn from the experiences of its operational team at Slough over the last 7 years. Its aim is to share some of the practical realities of implementing change, especially with regards to lean best practices. The author hopes that its readers can find relevance, usefulness and humour in these recalled memories.

*“So tell me again. You want them to go into a room, give them some felt tips and crayons and get them to draw. You also want them to take their shoes and socks off and you are going to play whale sounds at them. And this is how we are going to launch our new leadership programme?”*

*“Yep. And by the end of the day we will have a team of Bull’s.”*

*“Bulls?”*

*“Sorry. BUL’s. Business Unit Leaders. The front line in our war against waste”*

*“OK then but bet they don’t take their shoes off”*

*“You’ll see. Come along at the end”*

*“OK”*



**Feet on parade!**

The above was a conversation between the Operations Director and his facilitator.

The picture above, tells you who won the bet.

This article is part of the story of one company’s Lean journey as told through the eyes of that same facilitator. (The author)

*“Do you think we could do kanban?”*

*“What, real Just-in-Time supply style, make when you need to, triggered visually?”*

*“Yeah, that sort of thing. I was just thinking we currently CNC metal parts in Reading and then we ship the parts to stores in Slough. It’s got to bring some benefit if we made and assembled in the same place. Who knows we could even ship finished seals straight out of the Reading factory. What do you think?”*

*“Well there’s no batch size, little repeatability and demand jumps all over the shop. But if we could, then it would definitely help with our challenge of accountability. We could almost treat it like a small business. Lets try it.”*

This recollection is 2 years previous to the smelly feet moment.

They are discussing a newly launched product. Everyday components travel 35 miles from machine to stores. The Reading factory was crowded with machine tools and populated with machinists. Where could you put the parts when they were made? Who could assemble them? Who would arrange shipment and talk to customers. This was a factory not business. Or was it?

In the lean toolbox I am sure you are all familiar with the tool 5C or 5S. (If not go to Google and look it up, then go to your garage and apply it. No delays, learn by doing). I am always amazed at how much space can be found. In the Slough factory recently they have found enough space to create a service centre office and a new seal build area. The space was always there but it was hidden under the junk and inventory that comes with wasteful practices.

Back to Reading. Of course they found space and some of the machinists learnt to build seals. However, none of this was supposed to be happening since Lean just did not fit our business. There was no official budget. So the guys went to B&Q and bought some shelving (cheap, quick and very easy to assemble) and with a few coloured bins we quickly started the evolution from factory to business. It is amazing how success, (sales growth and delivery performance measures a magnitude better than any other product line), helps to prevent the backlash for breaking the rules.

*“So lets get this straight. The room is not big enough, we do not*



**Machining visual 'KANBAN' pull system**

*have enough chairs and only 1 in 5 of them understand English, is that the size of it?"*

*"Yep. But we do have the instructions translated into French, and we know how once it gets going the game basically runs its self. Lets give it our best shot, we really need these guys to change over to Fax Ban. We know that this is our best method of overcoming their resistances to the change. And it will be fun, you'll see."*



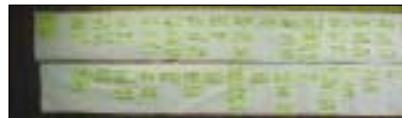
**The simulation under way using coloured cotton reels and O-rings**

So the Reading experiment had been a success and the idea of Operational Business Units had both been accepted and implemented. A simple simulation based upon some coloured cotton reels and O-rings had been used to great success to act as a catalyst: specifically helping people to agree that there was a problem, ie. the wasteful way in which we did business today. However only 20% of the seal was made in, the rest came from the external supply chain. How could we influence our

suppliers to change when we only ever demanded a price reduction?

So we went to them and helped them to run their business better. (Of course, benefitting in the process)

Covey states, "Begin with the end in mind" and that was how we planned their kanban supply to us. It's also a great approach to follow to make your plans realistic. If you (and your team) think of all the things that could go wrong, or stop you from making it happen today, then you are 50% closer towards making it real.



**A section of the 20ft process map!**

We first of all mapped their process and took photo's to make the map more visual afterwards. (If you want to see the 20ft laminated process map feel free to come and tour Slough and ask to see it.)

The end result was an agreement to put 30 parts (the highest runners) onto a Fax Ban supply method within 3 months.

As usual we suffered teething problems, but nothing that simple talking and listening (with the help of some problem solving tools) could not resolve.

Now in Slough we have evolved from Fax Ban to Zap Ban and have in excess of 1000 parts on a JIT style system of supply.



**An evolved JIT style supply system**

*"It always comes down to people. People resist change and people make change happen. Surely there must be a better way of involving the people so that they want to change?"*

*"We could try and involve them. We know that cotton reels work because people learn whilst having fun. Could we try the same for a change activity?"*

*"What makes the process of planning and implementing more enjoyable?"*

So we have had a success at Reading. We had received the green light to replicate the Operational Business Unit concept. We had new volunteer leaders, who knew it was more about being followed than leading and were eager to embrace their responsibilities in creating the brave new world.

But we still had a lot of people sitting in functional silo's waiting to see what was going to happen. So we gave them the chance to work it out for themselves.



**A workshop in progress**

By running workshops focussed on improvements, especially the design of layouts and tasks we started the

process of helping them to help themselves and therefore help the business to improve. It was not about some clever engineer having analysed the workflow and designed a new layout. It was about the people creating for themselves their new world. A better, faster, leaner world. Later this would become the LIFE process. (Little Improvements

From Everyone, our philosophy and toolbox for a process of on going improvement).

And it was fun. (It still is.)

And it worked. (It still does.)

*“So how can we make it even more sustainable? If we want this place to become our showroom and help us grow sales, how are we going to keep it improving and always looking great?”*

*“Well it always looks good when we have a customer tour, so why do we have to wait until then? Why not treat everyday as if a customer was going to tour?”*

*“What, like always being on tour? Hey that sounds good....”*

People often ask me what the business benefit is of the numerous tours that we arrange. Does it mean that we get more sales? Does it mean that our people are more engaged and more productive? I think that opening our doors means we have a virtually unlimited supply of ideas and catalysts. Who knows what innovative idea some visitor might bring? When we say “Always on Tour” we are, so please feel free to take up the invitation and come and

see for yourself. (Why not join the IOM visit on 16th March?)

Thank you for reading this. The author hopes that he has in some way stimulated or energised you to help in the war against waste. He also hopes that more of you who are in the front line feel compelled to

write of your experiences or open your doors to help others to start on their never ending journey. For those who wonder at the sources of such ideas, the author can recommend a diverse range of gurus who have all in some way helped to inspire this “learning to be delightful” journey.

### About the author

**Steve Harrison** has written these words based on a team’s memories. Steve currently holds the role of Strategy Development Manager for John Crane (Europe, Asia & Africa.) Previous to this he has been responsible for people & business development.

Steve has at various times worked in a variety of markets from Automotive to Space

currently working within the Process Industries. Steve is very keen on the implementation of good ideas, through thinking differently, learning by doing and effective planning to make things happen.

If any readers would like to discuss anything arising from this article or the war on waste in general please contact Steve on:

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