

**FEATURE ARTICLE**

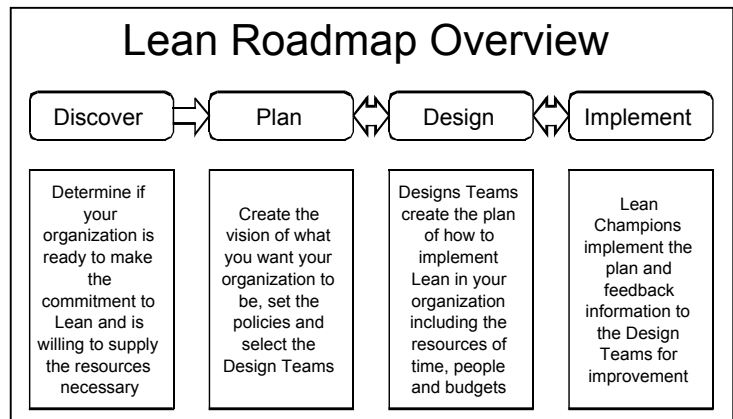
**Executive Overview of Lean Steering Committee Tasks**

**General Information**

This document was created to give top management a brief overview of the expectations for the Lean Steering Committee. Deciding to become a Lean organization is an undertaking that should not be taken lightly. Lean is not a “silver bullet;” it cannot fix all your problems all at once. But, if you are unsure of whether Lean works or not, just look at Toyota. They have been using Lean strategies for over 50 years and are now poised to become the number one car manufacturer in the world.

**Discover**

First, determine if your organization is ready to make the commitment to Lean and is willing to supply the resources necessary to meet the Goals and Objectives. The number one reason Lean implementations fail is because top management is not fully committed to participate and support the Lean efforts. If you have anyone in top management that does not completely believe in Lean, then you are doomed to fail, since Lean only



succeeds when management understands that they must become process-oriented and not just results-oriented. This makes Lean a long-term commitment, and management must be prepared to think 3, 5, 10 years down the road. Remember: committing to Lean is about Lean thinking, not Lean tools. Some ways for top management to gain knowledge about Lean methods include training, seminars, conferences, benchmarking, tours, and reading articles and books (see Addendum 1, Recommended Reading for Top Management Pursuing Lean).

**Lean Vision**

What do you hope to gain by becoming a Lean organization? How will you explain this to all levels of your company so that all understand the need for change? It is important to address these questions because you are setting the direction in which efforts will be focused (though it may take weeks or months before your Lean Vision is established). A Value Stream Map is a mechanism to help formulate your direction.

### ***Lean Policies***

It is important that you state specific policies upfront for employees and management, to make sure they know where you stand. For instance, “No employee will ever be laid-off because of improvements made through our Lean efforts.” Remember that policies drive behaviors; if you set a policy, employees will figure out a way to meet that policy (good or bad). Do not make policies overly restrictive; remember that you have to earn trust to build trust.

### ***Lean Goals and Objectives***

These can be SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound) or Stretch Goals (“Big Hairy Audacious Goals,” “Wildly Important Goals”). The key with the goals is that they fit the needs of your organization, so don’t just copy from another organization or borrow from your previous materials if those materials don’t fit within the realm of Lean. If you choose to use stretch goals, make sure they are not de-motivating in nature. For example, if the Steering Committee decides that they want to get the timeline for new product development down from two years to two months, ensure that the appropriate resources are supplied so that the goal can actually be reached.

### ***Lean Metrics***

The three most basic metrics of Lean are Quality, Cost, and Delivery (or Service Level). Do not make metrics overly complicated or meaningless. They must make sense to everyone in the organization because they are tied-in to your organization’s objectives. Remember “What gets measured, gets done.”

### ***Communication Plan***

When an organization undergoes a major transformation like Lean, management often makes the mistake of under-communicating the plan to employees by a factor of 10. For example, they may communicate the plan once or twice in meetings or organizational documents, but never really integrate the new vision into all communication materials in a consistent, across-the-board way. Once the transformation is underway, management’s goal should be to reinforce the new Lean plan using all types of communication (newsletters, emails, meetings, memos, etc). In other words, for every time an employee is told about Lean, they should have this idea reinforced nine other ways. Do not underestimate the importance of communication in bringing about change. Put yourself in the employee’s shoes; “Why do I have to change what I am doing?” Consider creating the “Burning Platform” reason Lean needs to be implemented, and become a Lean thinking organization. It is common for Steering Committees to use a Communication Design Team to help create and deploy the overall Lean Communication Plan.

### ***Learning Plan***

The Steering Committee is responsible for overseeing the overall Lean Learning Plan. For instance, there is a level of Lean that you need to know, and the level that you currently understand, but in between is a gap. The challenge is in determining ways to

eliminate that gap. One way to begin this process is to determine what type of training is required and who needs to attend. For example: all managers will attend a 2-day Lean Overview; all employees will attend a 2-hour problem solving seminar, and so on.

### ***Reward & Recognition Plan***

Typically the Reward and Recognition plan can take a back burner to the others before it has to be created and implemented. The Steering Committee is responsible for setting up this program and the key here is to reward early adopters first. The actual "reward" or "recognition" does not have to be money; there are many ways to reward individual and team-based accomplishments.

### ***Design Teams***

One of the first tasks assigned to the Steering Committee is identifying which Design Teams need to be started and when. The committee then determines Design Team Members and leaders. The most common Design Teams to start with are the Lean Communication Design Team, 5S, Visual, and POUS Design Team. After that, the design is based on the needs of the company. Essentially, the Design Team is responsible for creating the deployment plan (for 5S, etc) and executing it.

### ***Action Item Recap***

1. Determine if top management is fully committed
2. Lean Vision
3. Lean Policies
4. Lean Goals and Objectives
5. Lean Metrics
6. Communication Plan, Learning Plan, Reward & Recognition Plan
7. Design Teams