LEADERSHIP AND LEAN/IPD PROJECTS

1.0 Why

Lean/IPD is a significant departure from traditional project delivery models. With Lean/IPD, participants collaborate to create aligned project goals rather than create individual goals based on transactional agreements. Successfully implementing Lean/IPD requires strong leadership from the project team. Leadership refers to the capacity to produce movement and changes in the behaviors, concerns and cultural styles found in the community of participants in the project. On a Lean/IPD project:

- Project leaders build the ambition that every participant in the project develop leadership skills, to the extent they can.

- Leadership is essential for building the kind of new and unusual cultural environment in which Lean/IPD projects succeed.

If a Lean/IPD project does not have strong overall leadership, the entire project is at risk of reverting to traditional project delivery methods. Alternatively, there may be confusion between old and new delivery methodologies.

Leadership is not management. Management's purpose—to control and maintain stability—is diametrically opposed to leadership's purpose of effecting change. A manager typically keeps matters stable and in control; a leader typically unsettles, destabilizes and provokes team members to consider new opportunities.

2.0 What and 3.0 How

Lean/IPD projects function best when many team members are capable of leading. Traditional styles of top-down leadership cannot sufficiently handle the challenges of managing Lean/IPD projects.

Team members are typically brought into a project for their technical and professional expertise. More often than not, though, they lack the leadership skills for managing the complexity and shared responsibilities required in a Lean/IPD project.

The job of leadership is to bring a new future and circumstances, in effect a whole new world in which we are building new ways of working with each other.

Without strong, capable and widespread leadership, the kinds of long-held habits that need to be changed cannot be changed.

In a Lean/IPD environment, the goal is for each team member to lead at some point during a project's duration. With care and attention, each team member can learn to be a strong leader. It is therefore incumbent on project leaders to build leadership ambition in all team members. Eventually every team member will need to respond to—and take responsibility for—project events. This might include leading a sub-team, declaring a breakdown or acting as a technical expert in some aspect of the project.

Some people do not think it is possible to learn to lead. However, experience with Lean/IPD projects reveal that at the very least, many of the most potent leadership skills can in fact be learned by serious students over periods of time. Working in Lean/IPD projects allows team members to learn leadership skills through observation and practice. With appropriate Partner Selection, Team Forming and Onboarding, the team can use these skills to create a High Performing Team.

*The fundamental activities of the leader are rhetorical and conversational.
Leaders make, seek and clarify assessments; make requests and invite offers;
and solicit reliable commitments from team members.*

By forming Cluster Groups, leaders empower their team members to take responsibility for all aspects of the project in which they are involved. To do it well, leaders may need to gain support from owners, clients and more senior leaders in the project. Leaders may also opt to get help from those senior to them. The team can also assist by using Conditions of Satisfaction.

Effective leaders know that they must resolve tension from competing concerns. On the one hand, they must invite, encourage and "push" reluctant team members in directions they might rather avoid. On the other hand, effective leaders will continue to listen to all of their team members and learn from their opinions and objections. A strong leader will encourage concise A3 thinking and the use of analytical thinking tools such as Choosing By Advantages.

In Lean/IPD projects, leaders must produce learning environments in which it is O.K. to fail. In the best cases, teams learn to move quickly and not fear failure because they understand that "failing fast" is often the best way to accelerate learning.

The fundamental activities of the leader are rhetorical and conversational. Leaders make, seek and clarify assessments; make requests and invite offers; and solicit

reliable commitments from team members. They facilitate conversations, and identify and adjust to emerging team concerns. The fundamental skill of the leader is listening to the concerns of the community, and to the possibilities that can be brought to the circumstances in which the community finds itself. Leaders also alter the way that their communities listen so that new kinds of actions and opportunities can emerge.

Power—the capacity to move people in directions that they might not otherwise be willing to move—is a fundamental leadership trait. Good leaders gather authority and power while they work.

Effective leaders are keenly observant and attuned to team members' moods and can redirect a team's emotional energy. Whether a team member is on the brink of resignation or the entire team is energized, focused and enthusiastic, a good leader intervenes accordingly. A strong leader channels positive team energy to create solid Hand-off Work Planning.

Effective leaders—whether they are quiet and reserved, or talkative and gregarious—know how to select team members and get the best from them. They distinguish strengths and weaknesses of team members and know how to motivate them. By respecting their teams, great leaders earn their team's loyalty, trust and respect.

Quick Reference

For additional readings and information, please see the below information.

CHAPTER 12 – LEADERSHIP AND LEAN IPD PROJECTS
Additional Readings

Lean for Field Operations - Brian Lightner

Lean Journey - Lean Transformation of a Company

Lean principles in industrialized housing production the need for a cultural change

Safety - A Lean Transformation

Southern California Owners Forum

The Impact of Path Dependencies on Lean Implementation within a Construction Company - A Case Study

Three opportunities created by Lean Construction (new)