



One of the great benefits of my role as the Interim Executive Director is the quality of conversations I'm privy to and the quality of people associated with those conversations. We all know the importance of "essential conversations" or "crucial conversations" or "difficult conversations," all of which have spun out books and lessons and other progeny. But I'm particularly taken with Susan Scott's description of "fierce conversations":

"Fierce conversations are meaningful interactions. Not just the tough conversations you've been avoiding, but highly productive meetings that have everyone on the edge of their seats, fully engaged. Conversations that provide impetus for action . . . conversations that compel us to hold ourselves accountable, that negotiate through and past those worn-out techniques that result in tepid agreements so riddled with mediocrity and compromise that there's not much to celebrate."<sup>1</sup>

I like to think of a trailer of owners, designers, contractors and trades, fully engaged at the sticky wall, planning out their weeks' work and the next six weeks as an example I see every week of fierce conversations. But I was party to another one this weekend that struck me as hitting at the very heart of what we mean within the lean community about "sharing." We all understand generally that our Communities of Practice are staked on the premise that we will share our business experience with others so that the community and its members are better for it. But rarely does it strike so near the fundamental paradox in that sharing as the conversation this weekend between Dean Reed of DPR and Will Lichtig of Boldt.

If you don't know Dean Reed, you should get to know him. He is and remains individual member number 1 in LCI. He has led collaborative teams at DPR for parts of two centuries (that always sounds imposing). He was a key mentor at the California Prison Receivership program and a good friend with whom I consulted in June 2010 before I decided to take the Interim job.

Will Lichtig is no less a giant in our community. He wrote the Integrated Form of Agreement and he was as responsible as anyone for creating a way for integrated projects to actually work. Don't just believe me, read what *ENR* had to say about Will when he was recognized as one of the top national newsmakers in 2008.<sup>2</sup>

The conversation to which I refer, had begun some time ago, with Will requesting a Pull Planning Blocks game that DPR had developed for training its people and trades on their pull planning techniques. Dean had been long in responding, explaining the conundrum the Company faced:

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Scott, *Fierce Leadership* (Broadway Books, New York) 2009, pp. 18-19.

<sup>2</sup> <http://enr.construction.com/people/AOE-Gallery/newsmakers/080114/080114-15.asp>



To tell you the truth, [Will's request] presented our PMLG (Production Planning Leadership Group) with a very good question: whether to hold our IP close or share it with the world. Feather our own nest or raise the level of all ships? We went back and forth, most because just developing this one game took many hours by several people, all of which was done as part of their second job at DPR: to improve the company, make the industry better and the hopefully nudge the world a few inches forward. Should we just give that away, and to a fierce competitor to boot? In the end we made what all now see as the right decision, to share the game by making it available on the DPR Store. After we decided, it took some time to gather and package the materials and prepare the presentation for distribution.

This debate was not new to Will:

Needless to say, we periodically go through the same struggles. For us it's not just with simulations, but actually how we go about doing the work. Whether it is explanations of Takt Time Planning or Built in Quality, we often have to decide do we share how we are changing the way work is performed with a broader community or keep it to ourselves and the research community. The struggle is real. As Glenn [Ballard] said many years back, people and companies have to decide whether they have more to learn or lose from sharing.

In the end, Dean, DPR, Will and Boldt have all been more liberal in sharing than in hiding. Research supports this kind of learning: "Various scholars have recognized that *interorganizational* learning is critical to competitive success, noting that organizations learn by collaborating with other organizations as well as by observing and importing the practices of other organizations (March & Simon, 1958:188; Powell et al, 1996; Levinson & Asahi, 1996)." <sup>3</sup> LCI is committed to sharing what we know as well—that's at the heart of our Memorandum of Understanding with the AGC and our work with other Associations going forward.

This timely conversation is a reminder that one of our premier "sharing" events, our Academic Forum, is coming up on May 14 in Boulder, Colorado. At that time, we'll be sharing the variety of simulations that LCI uses in its teachings, along with some new ones from Tariq Abdelhamid. Thirty-three folks are signed up already. There is limited space (50 total) so if you're planning on going, now is the time to sign up.

And, if you're interested in the DPR simulations, Dean points out:

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<sup>3</sup> Dyer and Nobeoka, "Creating and Managing a High Performance Knowledge-Sharing Network: The Toyota Case," 1998, pg. 1, March 1, 1998 @ <http://dspace.mit.edu/bitstream/handle/1721.1/1441/147b.pdf>



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You will also find our new "Super Sticky" 4"x4" I Get | I Give Cards at the DPR Store. Just go to <http://www.onfulfillment.com/dpr/> and enter "notes" for the cards and "pull" as the keyword in the search box for the game. . . Our store manager expects to have them available on May 4. To be safe, I'd wait until the 7th before going to the store.

Thanks Dean and thanks Will for an important lesson to our community. We really are what we share.