



Lean Construction Institute

Building Knowledge in Design and Construction

Thanksgiving is approaching in two days. Thanksgiving is a complex word actually made up of both thanks and giving. We tend to concentrate on the first part of the word, the “thanks” part in thanking all of the people in our lives who have done all kinds of wonderful things for us. But we often don't remember the “giving” part which is in many ways at least as important as thanking folks.

I was listening to Garrison Keillor the other night and his Prairie Home Companion coming live from Houston, Texas. He was waxing poetic in much the same way that Greg Howell regales us with stories—but Greg's are actually true. The story this night was about Pastor Carol of the Lake Wobegone Lutheran Church who had delivered a sermon the previous Sunday on the nature of giving. She apparently recalled the parable that those who give of what they have, might be less sacrificial in their giving than those that give of what they lack, giving what they don't have. To Pastor Carol this meant that if you were lonely, you should give a party because what you didn't have was camaraderie. And if you were well known or renowned you should bestow the gift of notoriety on others, humbly forsaking it for yourself.

I was inspired by the story. I was then thinking about a Thanksgiving News Letter Update (sometimes the equivalent of a sermon). I had thought that I could thank those in our community who have done so much to make lean construction and design principles the fulcrum upon which the industry is transforming. That would in fact give the gift of notoriety to those friends of ours who have contributed so much. I've done that the past two years and I've had people write in that it is not a valuable use of their time to read my thank yous.

I understand that point. So this year, I would like to point out a special number of people who have actually given much and I would like to give them the gift of notoriety. Sometimes the value is given to the reader, and sometimes the value is in recognition alone. So with your permission, I'd like to recognize those that have given something very precious and something that each of them actually didn't have—namely, the give of time.

There are those of us who are paid to evangelize on behalf of the Lean Construction Institute and we do what we do out of great passion for the transformation that is happening in the industry. But we have been singled out to be compensated for that. There are those who give of their time on a regular and spectacular basis with no promise of compensation for that time. Those are the gift givers that we should celebrate on Thanksgiving and those are the ones that I would like to thank here publicly on behalf of our community.

I will undoubtedly miss people who have given much time to us and I apologize in advance for that oversight. On the other hand, my mind being what it is and the community's great expansion in the last few years being what it is, it is little wonder that I can't remember all of those who've contributed. But that's no excuse not to try.

I first want to thank Hal Macomber of Lean Project Consulting who nominated me for the position of Interim Executive Director. Little did Hal know that his gift to me would be two and half years in the most exciting, challenging and fulfilling position I've ever enjoyed. Of course I have to thank Greg Howell for tolerating my behavior over these years and being a great friend and mentor to me and the community as a whole. Donna Pemberton looms large, behind-the-scenes struggling with a large membership and little support as the only real full-time employee of LCI. She has given us the gift of patience and resoluteness—things we were missing before she came aboard. She has combined with Shannyn Heyer to provide the biggest bang for an organization our size. Shannyn gave us the gift of financial sanity which has made all the difference in our transition.

We wouldn't be where we are today without the leadership of both the board of directors to which I belonged and the new board which has been instrumental in crafting the future. There are a couple of members who have transcended both boards and their importance in our transformation cannot be underestimated.

Will Lichtig has been a tireless advocate for all things lean and reminds me of his wisdom in every conversation we have. Chuck Greco was the recipient of the mantle that Leo Linbeck looked to bestow on someone at Linbeck so many years ago. Chuck has continued to wear it with great honor and devotion. Both Chuck and Will have given vast amounts of time to the cause. That said, I am greatly honored to recognize the unbelievable leadership that Victor Sanvido has brought to our community.

There is a photo that we presented at the first annual Pioneers award of a group of young men on the grounds of Stanford University that had assembled to discuss problems of productivity in the construction business (the one on the right is young Victor in 2000 when he left Penn State for Southland). Victor was in that group, with Greg Howell and Glenn Ballard and Henry Parker. Victor was there with all his hair, his rugby determination and his legacy before him. He went on to teach graduate students at Penn State, many of whom have become stars in our community (Mark Konchar, Bevan Mace, Katherine Blume and others). When he left Penn State to work for Southland industries, he took that same conviction that naturally fit into a lean model – – removal of waste, identification and implementation of value and creation of a continual learning organization that is never satisfied with the status quo. When he was selected as chairman of the new board of directors that is to carry our vision forward, Victor grabbed the job by the horns and helped us seed the board (no pun intended) with owner



representation like Bill Seed, Craig Russell and Michael Bade.

If you know Victor you know that he has very little time on his hands. He cherishes his family and his weekly soccer game. But he has proven himself to be a deep devotee of lean construction and design processes and is at the forefront of transforming the industry.

As Thanksgiving approaches, I think each of these folks and the hundreds of others that I have met along the way, who given that great gift of time to help us change the industry. Little by little it seems to be working. Let's also thank Owen Matthews of Integrated Project Delivery in Orlando for giving us one of the first lean construction and design examples we have used. The vision of a \$6 million chilled water plant that can be improved over time is etched in my memory. And yet equally etched in my memory is the opening owners' panel at this year's Congress. Between Universal Health Services, the Walt Disney organization and the University of California at San Francisco we had billions of dollars of assets represented that had been or are being designed, constructed and operated according to lean principles. And what made this all possible is the fact that, along the way, true believers, from Dean Reed at DPR who was LCI member number one to the most recent individual member of LCI, gave of their time and their brainpower to move us in the right direction. I'll be hoisting a glass (or two) of a fine California Chardonnay in thanks and tribute to all of you. Join me in that toast.

And make sure you add, at the end of that toast, be safe my friends.