



December 2016 - Issue #130

Welcome from Lisa

I had a holiday-filled December and enjoyed it! Writing cards took days.....and days but it was nice to keep in touch. I also attended several holiday parties, spent time with my good friends in CA, went to AZ to spend Christmas with my mom and family (along with helping her with a variety of projects) and then on to Charleston to spend New Year's with my best friends.



Here is a picture from Christmas Day with my family - some jokesters and the rest. I'm appreciative that both of my parents were close to their siblings and we've stayed in close contact. I think it is a rarity these days.

In-between Christmas and New Year's, I studied like crazy for my APICS CLTD (certified in logistics, transportation and distribution) exam -and passed it! My APICS Chapter starts teaching this ever-critical topic in a month, so sign up now before classes fill up.

I also wrapped up 5 separate client projects in December - varied topics (SIOP, raising the bar on service, ERP selection and cost improvement) and tangible results. Better yet (for me), I enjoyed working with these clients and learned something from them as well.

It is an exciting career where you learn on every project and are able to add to your repertoire for future clients all the time. It is interesting how often a strategy that works with one industry like aerospace can help a completely different industry such as building products manufacturers. In honor of this concept, I thought I'd share a few strategies I learned from my clients this month.

IN THE NEWS

Please check out my latest speeches, articles & quotes:

- Led a webinar for TalentStream on "Reshoring Profits: The Increased Need for More Control, Speed and Profit" (available in my clients only website currently).
- Published an article, "[The Million Dollar Project Manager](#)" in *Project Times*.

I'm also the committee chair for the MCIE (Manufacturing Council of the Inland Empire)'s [Innovation Awards](#). Please pass on to any manufacturers and manufacturing students you think might be appropriate to submit an [application](#).

As we kick off 2017, pick a few professional development goals you think will make a difference and put them in your calendar. Don't delay or time will escape you.

Enjoy,
Lisa

Email

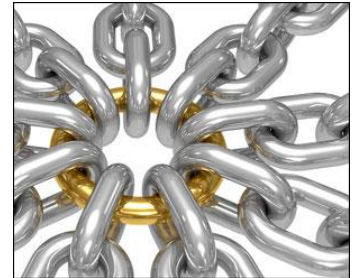
LMA Consulting Group, Inc.

P.S. If you know of anyone who could benefit from improved service levels, decreased lead times or increased levels of cash due to improved inventory processes, please refer them.

The Strongest Link in Your Supply Chain Obsession with Your Customer

One of our clients has a healthy obsession for the customer! It might drive some of his employees a little mad but it is effective. Adopting a bit of healthy obsession for your customers can go a long way!

In this case, our client was particular with every customer-facing document, interaction, piece of information and the like. This owner would keep track of who ordered what throughout each day, kept a pulse on what was going on vs. prior years, like years and would ask his employees who interacted with customers for customer feedback and the pulse of customers multiple times a day. Every employee and business partner/ trusted advisor knew customers were important.



In today's Amazon-impacted marketplace, keeping a pulse on customers is even more critical. Are you assuming what customers told you a year ago still holds true? Do you think it does? Probably not! Or are you relying on your salespeople to communicate changes to you? Do you prompt them or follow any proactive measures to make sure you find out what your customers prefer? Change is occurring on a rapid basis. Are you asking? For example, I'm sitting in first class on a flight to Dallas and they handed me a cookie for dessert. He didn't ask whether I'd want it heated up (which is the first time that happened). That small difference made a huge difference to me. It wasn't worth eating cold yet I'd have loved it heated up. I suppose it might be good that I didn't eat it but this small question could have gone a long way with customer service.

Technology for technology sake is expensive and useless. Put it to work. If you have a CRM system, find a new way to use it that will give you valuable intelligence on your customers. If you have an e-

commerce site, find a way to find out more about your customers - and potential customers. If you have access to business intelligence tools, use them to gain business intelligence on your customers' needs. And, if you have Excel, you can still track key characteristics about your customers. Who doesn't at least have Excel?! Become a little more obsessed with your customers.

Did you like this article? [Continue reading on this topic:](#)

[Why Customers Rule](#)

The Systems Pragmatist

Forget Data Cleanup and Find a Measure to Start NOW!

If you have the systems to measure your ideal metric, go for it but don't let it become an excuse! Find one that will measure progress and start immediately!

For example, in one of our clients, not only were the run rates incorrect but they were wildly different for similar items which would make planning an utter nightmare! However, there are still ways to measure progress and plan. Find a metric that won't change and stick to it. In this case, we used earned standard hours, and we are able to measure improvements in the metric. Of course, as data is cleaned up, we should put better metrics in place but it doesn't have to hold up progress! And we were able to plan to the expected earned standard hours as well. All is solved to an 80/20 standpoint which is all that is needed.



This type of scenario has come up on multiple occasions - actually almost every client has some sort of situation that fits in this mold (the only question is how significant). It could be that measuring inventory levels is challenging because the system reports aren't set up correctly. In this case, it could be that you count pallet rows or something else that is visible and easy. It could be that your system doesn't support run rates effectively (unfortunately that was true with one client). In this case, we found a manual process to keep the load visible while storing information in the system.

What is in common in all these examples is to start immediately with what you have and find a way to make progress. It certainly doesn't sound like rocket science but it drives results. If it was common, so many of our clients wouldn't make significant progress once we find the "right lever" to pull, similar to these situations.

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[Uncommon Common Sense Project Management](#)

Of course we talk about leadership more than anything else as it is #1 to business success. Thus, we are always looking for strategies and tips for success. One of our clients clearly prioritizes us - it is clear we are one of her top priorities. How often do you feel that way?

We happened to work with her in more than one company, and it was clear that her team appreciated her leadership style. People quite opposite in personality (who probably wouldn't agree upon much) seemed to enjoy working with her. Of course, no one is perfect (including her) but she had this particular quality down pat - she knew how to treat people. Do you?

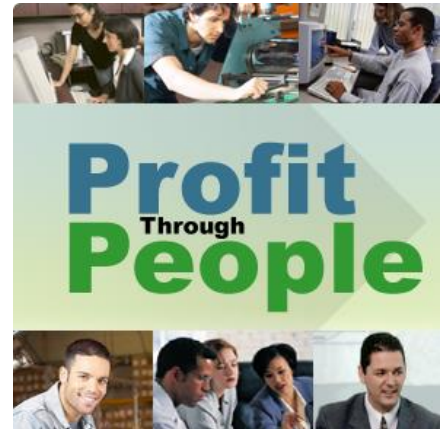
So, what are you doing to make your employees, peers, managers, trusted advisors and the like feel important? First, regardless of the fact that it is certainly a nicer way to live your daily work life, it will deliver results. Will you go the extra mile for someone who is rather grumpy and doesn't seem to appreciate what you do or for someone that makes you feel important?

Some of the strategies I've seen that achieve this goal include the following:

- Ask for their opinion.
- Show up to scheduled meetings (sounds really silly but is a BIG deal).
- Don't say you have an open door policy and then keep looking at the clock when they show up at 4:50pm.
- Find out what is important to the person and tailor projects to his/her interest.
- Appreciate him/her when everything isn't going perfectly.
- Take the time to review goals and performance at least quarterly (no matter what crisis is going on).
- Promote them and their projects to the rest of the organization.
- Ask how you can help.

Which of these will you start using tomorrow? There is NO reason to wait to make people feel important - after all, people are our #1 asset.

Did you like this article? [Continue reading on this topic: Leadership Will Make or Break Success](#)



We all know we should think long term. And we talk about thinking long term. But, do we actually think long term - and live with our decisions even when it's hard? Not nearly as often as we should!

Since we work with already successful manufacturers and distributors that want to build upon and accelerate success, we have worked with many executives who think long term; however, it remains a rarity. Just think about those executives who make a great long-term decision but waver when the going gets tough. I imagine we all know too many!



One client hired expensive engineers and R&D experts during the worst of the recession when they struggled to find a job. He had no need for them at that time but he realized that longer term, he'd be able to start designing a new product line to enter a new market ahead of the competition and would gain top talent to help with this endeavor. Do you think they left at the top of the market when the competition could have offered a nice pay increase? Not on your life!

Another client could have gained more profit by squeezing a bit more out of suppliers but took the long view instead. The executive team knew that finding win-win solutions would be the better long-term approach even though Board members and private equity partners would have preferred immediate progress. Later, when critical materials went on allocation, we were able to support customer needs when the larger competition (who should have had more pull) struggled due to this long-term view. Imagine how differently the sale of the company would have gone if we couldn't service our customers?!

Decide which long-term views are worth pursuing and don't waver. You'll thrive over the long-term. We find that people tend to "give up" with their long term strategies just prior to huge success. Don't become one of those statistics. Instead, stick to your long-term view.

Did you like this article? Continue reading on this topic:

[**The 4 Leadership Essentials Required for Long Term Success**](#)

Connections

Connections and relationships are the 80/20 of success!

THIS MONTH'S REQUESTS:

- Following a successful APICS Inland Empire executive panel & networking symposium on Navigating the Global Supply Chain, we have scheduled our next one on May 6th with the theme "Disruptive Innovations in Logistics". Stay tuned on www.apics-ie.org.
- My Ontario **ProVisors** group of trusted advisors is looking for a top notch real estate attorney and commercial real estate broker. **Email me** with referrals.
- I know of a supply chain leader with an end-to-end supply chain background with an emphasis in procurement and import who is interested in his next opportunity. Email **him** with referrals.
- Refer anyone interested in taking their personal career up a notch by advancing their supply chain and manufacturing skills to take a look at the best **education and certifications** available.



NOTE: To submit an item for this section, please send me an email with a short description of your needs and an email address. Please note that NOT all requests will be published as it must fit the guidelines and align with the Profit through People brand.

What is *Profit through People*?

I've used the Profit through People brand since my newsletter's inception in 2006 as it resonated with me. Although I consult on topics within each of my service lines--Eagle Eye Strategic Focus, The Strongest Link in Your Supply Chain, the Systems Pragmatist & Profit through People--I find that people are key to success in every situation. If you are interested in elevating your business performance, please [contact us](#).



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