Welcome from Lisa

I've started the year off with an intense schedule and am enjoying the pace. I could do without getting the nasty virus going around CA; however, I cannot complain. My nephew's 7th grade workload seems worse than most of my clients rough days so.....

I'm very excited about my new umbrella brand, **The Manufacturing Connector** as no day goes by that I cannot tie everything I do and the results I help my clients achieve to it! I'm going to start a weekly blog post from the desk of the manufacturing connector so please check it out.

I'm thrilled to announce that SAP recognized me as one of the top 46 resource and optimization influencers in supply chain management. Check it out here. It wouldn't have been possible with YOU. Since Valentine's Day is a good opportunity to appreciate our relationship, I wanted to pass on these cupcakes (don't they look great?)

This month, I'm back to my *Eagle Eye* service line, and my feature article talks to a critical topic in organizations today - the value of metrics. Please also note that I added a "Connections Spotlight" of the month to highlight a colleague and his/her services, products or other value. Let me know what you think.

IN THE NEWS
Please check out my latest speeches, articles & quotes:

- My manufacturing skills gap survey results were quoted in numerous media outlets including *Sage ERP*, *The Saratogian*, *Control Design* and *RFgen*.
- Published "*Kick off the New Year with Power*" in *Project Times* and "*Navigating Culture Change is Essential to Success*" in *Executive Brief*.
- Lastly, I had fun speaking at a UCLA Alumni lunch on supply chain management, an ExecSense webinar on establishing goals, and as a FundingPost Investor Roundtable panelist.

Enjoy,
Lisa

Email
LMA Consulting Group, Inc.

P.S. Please think of me if you should know anyone who would like to connect business objectives with results.

I refer to one of my core service lines as "Eagle Eye" since I've found that selecting the right priorities to work on is half the battle (if not more) to succeeding in business. After all, what's the point of working long, tireless hours on the wrong priorities? Formulating strategy is rarely the problem; instead, 80% of the time, the problem is one of the following: 1) You don't have time to work on the critical priorities. Perhaps you are not selecting well and/or you have too many priorities…. 2) You don't know how you're doing on those critical few priorities.

How can you have an eagle eye to pick out priorities and actions required to thrive if you don't know how you are performing? You can't. Thus, metrics are vital to success. A few keys to leveraging metrics to drive bottom line business results include: 1) Track only the essential metrics. 2) Understand trends. 3) Focus on corrective action.

1. Track only the essential metrics: Just tracking metrics is useless; however, tracking and using the "right" metrics is a secret to success. How many of us have metrics and spreadsheets being tracked that we do not use or do not understand? I venture to guess ALL of us. Why? It is someone's job to track the metrics.

It might seem radical to consider stopping all of your metrics for a day or a week. Give it a try. Find out which are missed. Are they missed because they are important to success? Put only the critical metrics back in place. Can you see whether you are on track with key objectives by the metrics you have in place? If not, you might need to add a few. Once you're finished with this exercise, you will undoubtedly have fewer metrics but you'll be on top of how your business is performing.

2. Understand trends: Even the "right" metrics are useless if you don't understand how you are performing over time. A single point in time could be a huge success, a horrible failure or average performance yet you'd have no idea which without a plan and trend data. I've recently become aware of the term "bowling chart" which is the lean terminology for tracking performance on policy deployment objectives. To me, it is a trend of key metrics.

When I think back to the clients where we've achieved significant business performance improvement, metrics have always been an essential piece of the puzzle. What is the plan? How did we perform? (And let's NOT wait too long to know!) How do we know whether especially good or bad performance was an outlier? Where should we focus resources? Which action plans should we follow? Impossible to know until you track performance trends.

3. Focus on corrective action: Let's say you have the "right" metrics and have trending information; unfortunately, they can still be useless if you don't DO anything with the information. It might seem obvious that corrective action must follow; however, I find it is rarely done.

For example, one of my clients had to reduce past due and was able to trace the bottleneck to one of their operations. The next step would be to devise a corrective action to resolve the bottleneck and bring past due down towards 0 to rapidly to resolve customer concerns. So, why didn't that happen quickly? Corrective action requires the hard work of blocking and tackling and often is unpopular to boot. In my experience, figuring out the appropriate corrective action isn't rocket science; however, implementation can seem like rocket science. It requires confronting reality, addressing issues upfront, and excellence in execution - a rarity in my view.

My clients who take metrics to heart and ensure they are integrated into the culture succeed. My client who don't flounder! Which will you be?

Did you like this article? Continue reading on this topic:
Scorecard/ Metrics - how to make a difference to your bottom line

Warehousing is an often overlooked area of the business. We store and ship. How hard can it be? Well, there are plenty of ways to dramatically improve your warehousing service and efficiency.
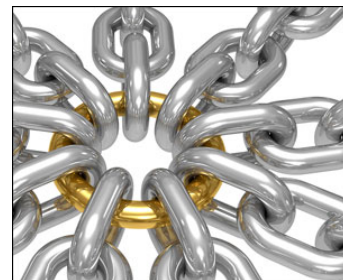
1. **The fundamentals** - Every manufacturer has to do something in terms of warehousing and distribution, even if they cross-dock everything. One of the most overlooked keys to success is to look at the fundamentals.
2. **Inventory record accuracy** - Although a fundamental, I thought it deserved it's own item due to the critical importance. It doesn't matter how efficient your warehouse is IF you cannot find what you need when you need it.
3. **Flow** - Although you can go down the Toyota Production System or Lean path in terms of flow, if that sounds Greek to you, don't despair. I've found flow to be uncommon common sense. Take a step back and observe how your product moves through the building. How does it flow? Does it make sense? Do you happen to drive in circles? Sounds silly but frequently occurs.
4. **WMS light** - One of my colleagues introduced me to this term, and I love it. In essence, whether or not you need a fancy software solution down-the-line to optimize your warehouse, there's no reason to jump from crawling to running the marathon in a day. Which WMS (warehouse management system) tools can be of benefit to drive results? How do you make progress in that direction without having to jump full in to a complex WMS system? WMS light - focus on what makes sense with tools that support it.
5. **Mixed mode** - In today's environment, you must understand your business. Is it pick and ship? Do you ship 1 piece at a time or in bulk? Do you support retail, distribution, etc.? In today's world you might need to do 2 or 3 completely different processes. You must set your warehouse up to support each of them - and it's unlikely to be the same setup for each.

Did you like this article? Continue reading on this topic:
Bedrock Topic: Inventory Accuracy

Almost every company I work with seems to get caught up in the bells and whistles of their new or upgraded software; however, when push comes to shove, the bells and whistles mean nothing if they cannot perform the basics. One of those basics is to be able to extract the right data at the right time from their system in a meaningful format for decision-making.

How many executives are able to extract meaningful data to make informed decisions with minimal time investment - without hiring a data ninja? Only a hand full. On the other hand, how many executives need to be able to make informed decisions rapidly in today's face-paced environment? 100%! Thus, I thought a few keys to success were in order:

1. **Data integrity** - before we move on, it's best to make sure any data used in critical decision-making isn't "garbage in-garbage out". I've yet to come across a company that didn't need to focus some efforts in this area.
2. **Data extraction tools** - query tools, report writers, business intelligence tools, etc. Worst case, you're likely to have Sequel or something like that which requires a stronger programming

background to utilize. Simpler is better; however, a simple front end usually requires a more complex back-end. Invest time to find the "right" one(s).
3. **File tables** - It shouldn't be an Easter egg hunt to find the right files. Put together a map/ cross-reference of your files.
4. **Business sense** - You can hire a data ninja, extract the perfect data and yet still have lousy decision-making abilities if you don't add a business element into the mix. Does the data make sense? You'd be surprised how often I've received reports which were millions of dollars off. No one gave it a logic check.
5. **Less is more -** This entire process is far from a no-brainer to set up successfully. Why waste time on developing 25 reports when 5 metrics tell you everything you need to run the business. Instead, focus your high-skilled IT / business, hard-to-find resources.

Did you like this article? Continue reading on this topic:
The Foundation of Business Success - Data Integrity

Profit through People
Your Presence

I've discovered that as much as content and results are king, presence matters. First impressions can be paramount. Don't despair if you "missed your opportunity" as you can recover; however, it's best to start with your best foot forward.

As I've always been FAR more concerned about results vs. format/ presentation, I could tell you many stories of my mistakes and how I overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles - all stemming from a poor first impression. On the other hand, I can also tell you stories of where I never overcame first impressions with some folks with negative consequences. Thank goodness, I can also tell stories of starting with a good first impression. I guarantee, it is the BEST way to go.

This popped to mind as I've recently been collaborating with a few other consultants to implement rapid improvement at a client. Since I know the people better (since I've worked with them longer), it was interesting to hear the assessments largely from presence and how people interacted in meetings. Whether we like it or not, how we look, talk, hold ourselves and interact with others provides a statement about us. For example, one person carried himself with authority and it was obvious he commanded respect of people in the room. Another person of the same level communicated in a weaker style - whether he was brighter, achieved better results or a wizard, the perception was that he was at a lower level in the organization.

To some degree, it is easy to resolve - ask those around you. Ask those who will tell you the truth. Ask those at the position you want to impress. What pops to mind when they see you? Then take actions to evolve and align your presence with what you'd like it to be. Consider your appearance, clothes, style, non-verbal clues, communications, listening etc. Even items such as how you sit in the chair convey a presence. To some degree, it reminds me of golf. Do this, do that, bend here, do the splits there......then the instructor asks, "Why aren't you relaxing your swing?" Perhaps that's why it is harder than it seems.

How is your presence?

## Did you like this article? Continue reading on this topic:
Presentation Skills

You're Not the Person I Hired

by Janet Boydell, Barry Deutsch, and Brad Remillard

Finding the right people is critical in today's workplace. Who hasn't had the feeling of "you're not the person I hired"? If you want to successfully hire top talent, you cannot afford to miss this book!

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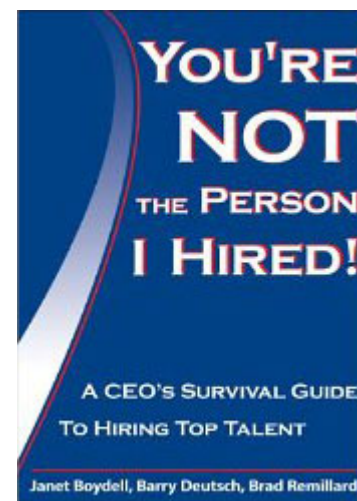
THIS MONTH'S REQUESTS:

- I'm thrilled that my APICS Inland Empire Chapter has opened registration for our spring executive panel & networking symposium on May 3rd. Learn more & register early to get your seat.
- My Ontario ProVisors group of trusted advisors is looking for an employment attorney. If you know anyone who fits the bill, please refer them to me.
- One of my colleagues is looking for his next venture/ opportunity. He is a seasoned e-commerce operations executive who is looking for a leadership role within a company that wants to establish or grow their e-commerce business. He has worked with folks like Costco.com, iHerb.com, Joann.com etc. Please contact Craig directly.
- One of my colleagues is facilitating a "Move up/ Manage Right" seminar in Orange County on March 24th-25th. To learn more and register, click here.
- A well-respected Inland Empire manufacturer (Combustion Associates Inc.) is looking for a Purchasing Assistant. It is a great opportunity for a professional with solid communication, purchasing and manufacturing metals/ fabrication industry experience. If you know of anyone who might be a good fit, please email me or drop them a line. A job description should be on www.apics-ie.org soon

CONNECTION SPOTLIGHT - VALERIE LADD
As connections and relationships are VITAL to personal and professional success, I thought I'd start highlighting a person each month from my network who I think can add value. This person could be a client, a trusted advisor, an APICS Board member etc.

I thought I'd start with one of my long-standing APICS Board members, Valerie Ladd. Valerie is the epitome of service. As I believe in the power of service, it seemed a natural place to start. Valerie and I have collaborated on APICS financials, client projects, and professional strategies for success. I cannot think of anyone who provides a higher level of service with such a positive attitude. I'm constantly impressed by her passion for continuing education as well - whatever she can do to improve her skills and provide better results for her clients. Valerie is an I.T. consultant and ERP implementation guru who focuses on Microsoft AX. AX is a solid ERP software option for manufacturing environments. Valerie is outstanding with implementations, upgrades and finding ways to utilize the software to achieve business results - the right combination of technical & business! Contact Valerie at valerie@arbelatech.com or 909-957-4483.

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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