



Just as a shining example provides inspiration and encouragement that others can follow, a giant misstep offers an opportunity to reflect and learn and inspire us to do better. The press has blamed Toyota's quality failures on its never-ending drive to reduce costs through the elimination of waste and streamline material flow, what we call lean manufacturing. The Toyota Production System is not the culprit. The quality issues, which are not isolated to a single design flaw or vehicle, prove beyond a doubt that the new CEO and his executive team lack the dogged determination for excellence and quality focus at every facet of the manufacturing process that the company's automotive pioneers made legendary. Unfortunately these pioneers are either dead or retired. Toyota CEO Akio Toyoda, who wasn't even born when Taiichi Ohno started the company's original lean transformation in the early fifties following his famous pilgrimage to Detroit.

In the world of continuous improvement we never let a good crisis go to waste. Just as we have sought inspiration from Toyota's rise from a regional automaker to one of the world's largest and most profitable corporations, we should seek inspiration from Toyota's recent missteps. This is an emphatic reminder to never take our focus off of customer satisfaction and the pursuit of quality and reliability, or to ignore problems that surface until they mushroom beyond control.

In this issue, our consultant, David Pate, inspires us with his column, "Problems are Treasures." He talks about the fact that problems are not something to be avoided, blamed on others, ignored or hidden. Remember the old adage, "No problem is a problem."

Throughout this issue are inspirational stories about things many of you, our clients, are doing to make a positive impact on your business. An underlying theme in every article is leadership focus on their personal standard work. As leaders, it's easy to say, "My day is different. I can't adhere to

standard work." But that's not true. McCain Foods and Hayward Pool Products have implemented leader standard work at the plant level. They are building a disciplined management system that defines standard work, rewards correct behavior, ensures an audit process and holds people accountable. Greg Anapol, talks about the standardized management process they use with the Brady Business Performance System. Their commitment to strategy deployment has helped the company to integrate 30 acquisitions since 2003, implement lean at 34 sites, align each business to organization goals, sustain improvements and increase collaboration.

I hope you'll enjoy our newest feature, "Leadership Insights." Our first feature highlights Patrick Spear, CEO of the Identity Group. A sales and marketing professional first, he was once skeptical that lean would benefit his company. Today he sees lean as the enabler of growth and profitability. His leader standard work includes a quick morning check of his deployment dashboard followed by a walk around the shop floor and a series of regular calls with staff members.

This issue of *Managing Times* is filled with morsels of inspiration, fresh ideas and helpful hints. I hope you'll find the fuel you need to forge ahead and scope out the standard work you need to drive sustainable results, inspire your workforce and plant the seeds for profitable growth. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anand Sharma". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line underneath the name.

Anand Sharma  
Co-founder & CEO  
TBM Consulting Group, Inc.  
asharma@tbmcb.com