

## The Toyota Culture: The Heart and Soul of the Toyota Way

By Mike Serena, Ed.D., Managing Director, TBM LeanSigma® Institute

No sooner than Liker comes out with his next book on Toyota and several of our readers have sent me many emails requesting a review, so here goes!

This book is a follow up to Liker's original book, *The Toyota Way*, which summarized management's principles in a 4P model—that is, philosophy, process, people, and problem solving. The 4Ps emphasize a long-term philosophy of adding value to both customers and society. However, the main focus of *The Toyota Culture* (Jeffrey Liker and Michael Hoseus, McGraw-Hill, 2007) is how Toyota establishes its core competency, which is all about respect for people and the importance of continuous improvement.

The book is divided into five distinct parts. Part 1 defines and discusses how Toyota views culture in their organization as “the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal adaptation...and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.” This definition is the foundation of the “Three Levels of Culture” as defined by Edgar Schein: I, Artifacts and Behavior (what we see); II, Norms and Values (what they say); and III, Underlying Assumptions (what they deeply believe and act on).

Part 2 examines the people value stream or the process of developing people who are willing and able to continually improve the way work is done. This process is organized in four distinct stages: attract people with the right qualities, develop people to do the jobs as assigned, engage people to contribute to continuous improvement, and inspire people to become committed members of the company, community, and society.

Part 3 discusses the four daily processes that need to be in place to support the people value stream to ensure continual growth and development: work groups to support daily learning and team problem solving, clean and safe workplace to ensure the security needed so they can focus on production issues, two-way communication to listen to and give feedback to team mem-

bers and leaders to improve themselves and operations, and servant leadership that supports, teaches, and is open to input

Part 4 discusses the four organizational processes that need to be in place to enable team-member development and high performance, or more specifically creating an “enabling” versus a rigid bureaucracy:

- Planning employment levels to provide stability and security
- Establishing a human resources department that ensures fair and consistent policies and practices and also supports team morale and growth
- Encouraging deep learning and growth rather than monetary rewards and fast-track promotion
- Encouraging policy deployment to achieve long-term mutual prosperity

Part 5 examines how Toyota has adapted many of its principals to a wide variety of their working environments.

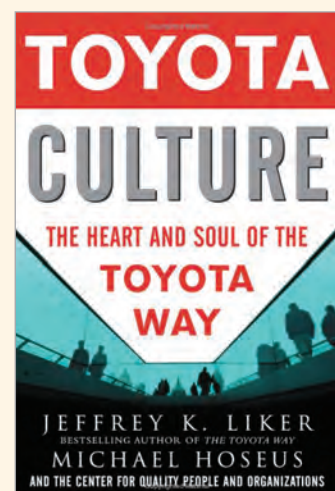
There is a great deal of material in this 548-page volume and many of these pages rehash *The Toyota Way*. In the end, the book attempts to leave the reader with several very clear “lessons learned:”

- *Leaders must lead*—they need to be brutally honest regarding the current situation and they must model the desired behavior reflecting companywide values and beliefs.
- *Change requires a reason and a vision* in how “change” will benefit both the company as well as all employees.
- *People must be taught and supported* because people generally resist change, and “learning by doing” is more powerful than “learning by listening.”
- *Change needs a plan and a process* because attitude and behavior change must be supported by structural change, metrics, and an understanding that transformation is a “journey of small steps.”

In summary, I found the book a reinforcement of the *Toyota Way* and I found more pragmatic application in Liker and Meier's 2007 book, *Toyota Talent*, which I highly recommend to anyone involved in training. In this book resides some excellent detail as to how Toyota employs its training strategy throughout its entire organization and at all levels and it might be a good prerequisite to reading *The Toyota Culture*. ■



Mike Serena



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