

Most Misunderstood Principle of Operational Excellence, “Contribute to Society” – *Martin Nazareth, President OpEx Solutions*

Until recently, I was of the opinion that “Respect for Humanity” was the either most misunderstood or most ignored principle that we learned from the Japanese. However, I have come to realize that “Contribute to Society” is more important and even more misunderstood and/or ignored by most organizations. These core values have been in visionary organizations like the Toyotas, Tatas, Ford, ...

Unless we are able to satisfy a need for society, we may not actually be contributing to society. If we are actually trying to push more of what is not needed or what is not good for society, but, are doing it for making money for the company, then, we are not actually contributing to society. In some situations, we may be negatively contributing to society and in such situations, will probably not last long.

Henry Ford wanted to build cars that were affordable by the common man. Ratan Tata wanted to build the [“Tata Nano” as the peoples car](#). Sakichi Toyoda invented the automatic loom in pursuit of reducing the drudgery of manual looms. Toyota also has the Company’s founding mission to [“make better cars and contribute to society.”](#)

It is interesting to note the rippling positive effects that “contribute to society” has on organizations.



While many of the organizations had and have good intentions, we probably have quite a few organizations that contribute negatively to society and I would refrain from naming them:

Off-shoring of manufacturing operations for example, adds unnecessary wasted logistics that eventually will hurt, not only the economy, but the citizens and the environment.

Encouraging people and organizations to live beyond their means through credit cards, loans beyond the healthy ratios of debt-income, deficit financing with loans like the home equity line of credit and improvement loans to pay the installments of their original hi-risk loans, ultimately drive a good number of organizations and people to bankruptcy and to the streets.

Many companies are applying Lean, ... to reduce costs through the elimination of jobs. If continuous improvement methodologies are applied for such reasons, does it really contribute to society?

It is sad to note the rippling negative effects of a lack of “contribute to society” leads people and organizations to be self-centered and ultimately significant waste and thereby demise of organizations.



During consulting, I often tell our clients – while we want to accomplish more with less, it does not mean that our intent is to lay off employees. In fact it is the contrary. We want to eliminate waste and enable accomplishing the work in the allocated time at a standard normal pace, improving first time quality and improving the outgoing product quality and reliability. Thereby being able to have less overtime and more bonus that enables employees to have more time for their families, spirituality and self.

Hence continuous improvement methodologies need to have the right intention and spirit at the center that everything points to and stems from contributing to society. With “contribute to society” at the center we will automatically achieve “respect for humanity” and thereby have people, companies, organizations, countries, ... growing steadily for the long haul.