

The Finish Strong™ monthly e-newsletter helps business leaders examine issues important to taking operational performance to world-class levels. Do your Operations deliver your company's espoused competitive advantage to every client on every order?

Finish Strong™ is about developing an appropriate Operations strategy, and effective execution, dotting operational i's and crossing operational t's as you go.

Your company cannot afford to be sloppy if you want it to be great.

HELP YOUR CUSTOMERS SLEEP

Your customer wants to know that you think about his business. He wants to know that you understand how your goods and services impact his profitability. That includes how you could impact his reputation with defective product, how you can increase his costs with insufficient planning and controls, and how your involvement in helping them identify and solve problems can support their success.

Because defective product and insufficient planning and controls are problems waiting to be solved, learning to think together to solve problems with your customers, and your suppliers, and within your own organization can greatly reduce your customers' fears about outsourcing to you.

Intel knows that an effective supply chain, especially one geographically and culturally distributed, can only exist with common reasoning and communication processes. That is why Intel is requiring its key suppliers to learn to think with it, using its reasoning methodology supported by 3rd party software.

Without a standardized business process for problem solving, you are leaving that critical aspect of your business, and your customers', to the vagaries and variation of disparate problem solving skills, disparate reasoning, and disparate communication. No wonder your customer can't sleep.

Stop counting sheep. Begin to develop standardized question and reasoning processes that build knowledge creation, sharing, and conservation into the fabric of your organization.

DARK CLOUDS ON THE MANUFACTURING HORIZON

Several recent economic indicators suggest the US economy in general, and manufacturing in particular, may be entering a recession likely to last two years. I don't know if that prediction, or some recognizable variation of it, will come true or not. But I know that if it's true, most of you need to have a strategy for how you will retain your most valuable workers despite slumping sales.

While manufacturing employment has dropped significantly over the last 10 years, that reduction has been primarily felt by those with low level skills. The demand for employees in higher skilled manufacturing positions has in fact increased. A manufacturing recession would further darken the reputation of a manufacturing career, perhaps crippling the supply of skilled personnel for years to come.

Concerned you can't afford to keep them? If they are skilled and have the characteristics you seek in employees, you can't afford not to.