-- Speaker 0   00:00:04   Make it right. The manufacturing podcast,

Speaker 1   00:00:10   Several proven methodologies that work, and guess what they all center around ensuring that people who do the worker I'm powered involved in and trained on continuously improving the processes they do every day at work, I'm quoting from a post that I saw on LinkedIn, and it got a lot of reaction and engagement from the manufacturing community. The comment was from Shane Wentz, who has helped the U S army Nike and Siemens with continuous improvement. He's a certified lean six Sigma master black belt, and he's the co-owner of a change in latitude consulting on Janet Eastman this week on make it right podcast, Kevin Snook. And I are pleased to have Shane who is that certified lean six Sigma master black belt on the show. I don't think we've ever had one of those before on the show. Have we, Kevin? No, that I know of. No. So it is really great to have you here, Shane, and, uh, we're really looking forward to hearing your thoughts on continuous improvement. So welcome to the maker read podcast.

Speaker 2   00:01:11   Thanks, Janet. I really appreciate the opportunity.

Speaker 1   00:01:13   My pleasure. So let's talk a little bit about how you actually got into continuous improvement because you started out with a military background.

Speaker 2   00:01:22   Yeah. Yeah. Funny story. Um, one of my favorite poems is a, a, a path less traveled, uh, by Robert Frost. And I tends to be a lot of, of what I ended up doing in life. And, um, yeah, I, I was in the military and I was, you know, my wife and I sat back a couple of years ago and figured out in 21 years of marriage, we've moved 12 times. Uh, so you can do the math on the averages there. Um, but I was the guy that would come in and kind of be the fix it guy, you know, come in and, and make changes and, and get things running, you know, I think more effectively. Um, and, and then I'd get a phone call and, and go somewhere else and do the same thing. And, you know, at, at the time as I was going through this, I, I was doing my master's degree and, you know, started really studying this thing called continuous improvement. And it just really struck a chord with me. Uh, and it wasn't until a few years later in my career in the army, uh, that the army was rolling out. This thing called lean six Sigma, uh, happened to be at the right place at the right time and Washington DC at the time, uh, was able to go in and get certified as a black belt started doing it. Part-time really loved it. Um, got the opportunity to get certified as a master black belt. And, uh, I've been doing it ever since.

Speaker 1   00:02:40   Okay. So the reason that I got in touch with you is because I loved your post because you kind of indicate that it doesn't matter what label you put on it, whether it's lean or agile or Chi's, and it's all just continuous improvement. And it all really starts with the people on the front line, helping them be successful. Right? Yeah.

Speaker 2   00:03:00   It's, it's, it's really interesting. I have a lot of spirited conversation with others in, in that, you know, continuous improvement practitioners. And one of the things that, that really, um, you know, th that I continue to focus on is, Hey, let let's stop talking about is lean better is six Sigma better is lean six Sigma better is agile, better is, you know, there, there's all these different labels and they've all got their different methodologies or different tool sets. Right. And, and there's merit to each of them, but, but let's really strip it away and say at the core of all of them are people. And I think when you start having those discussions that they get very passionate and probably rightfully so. I think a lot of people lose the people part. So let's all just say, Hey, let's agree that whatever methodology you use within continuous improvement, people are at the center of it. And then let's start there and build out. And I think we'll, we'll get further along.

Speaker 1   00:04:01   Right? Well, it's the people that drive the process, right? Like Kevin and I we've talked about this hundreds of times, if your people aren't on board, you don't have a process, right?

Speaker 2   00:04:14   Yeah, exactly. And I, you know, and I've seen this unfortunately, many organizations where the organization, you know, they, they, they want to do the right thing, their heart's in the right place, but t --

-- hey'll do things like either they'll bring in, you know, a large bundle of outside continuous improvement experts or build this huge internal capability, um, that basically then starts going around from function and function and, and, you know, showing people the right way to do it. And, and, you know, making processes more efficient in, in all the while the, the people that do it, the subject matter experts are just sitting there and they're kind of bystanders and, you know, well, it there's a lot of things wrong with that, but what ends up happening is then these experts peel away the people that do the job every day, this real true subject matter experts go back to doing it. And then they go back to doing it the way they've always done it. And in leadership, doesn't get it. And they're like, we don't understand. We've spent all this time and money on this. Why can't you people just do what we're telling you to do, and they're missing the whole point of it. It's because you didn't get their buy-in, you didn't get their engagement yet out of the same mouth. You're saying. Yeah, of course. You're the subject matter experts.

Speaker 1   00:05:40   Yeah. Yeah. Kevin you're nodding. Do you want to make a comment in there at all?

Speaker 3   00:05:45   Yeah. I'm nodding nodding at everything in here. It's um, I remember when I was working for Proctor and gamble and we were rolling out high performance work systems and the TPM, the total PR uh, predictive maintenance and, and I was a predictive maintenance pillar for the, for the globe, uh, for one part of the business. And, uh, I was given these nine manuals to read. And, and then these nine manuals to go from factory to factory and teach everybody what these nine manuals were for. And this was one pillar out of nine pillars of the, of the total program. And it was like, this is just impossible. What we're doing, suffocating people with information. And what we really want to be doing is helping them to do, helping make it easy to do the right thing, rather than tell them specifically how they should be doing everything. And you know, that that's always been the philosophy I think is how do we look at the frontline employees and then make what they're doing easy for them to do so that they can continue to do it and continue to improve it.

Speaker 1   00:06:46   So, Shane, do you have it, do you want to add to anything on the Kevin had said there?

Speaker 2   00:06:51   Yeah. It's spot on Kevin and, and, you know, there, there's a human behavior model that, that basically says, and I've heard it referred to as the bell curve or, um, Tim kite calls it the 10 80 10, where, you know, if you take any, any set of employees or even sports teams, right. You've got, um, about 10% that are elite performers. You have now he'd say 10. I say it's more like 5% that are your under performers. The rest are doing what they're supposed to do every day. So if you believe in that model, which I do about 95% of people are doing what they're supposed to do yet, we don't see them as subject matter experts. And we come in and we tell them exactly how they're supposed to do it. And it's just, it, it, it doesn't make any sense to this thing. We call continuous improvement. So you have to involve the people. Um, they have to be at the crux of everything. You do, you have to train them, you have to coach them, you have to empower them. And, and quite honestly, you have to let them make mistakes and, and you have to let them learn. I mean, that's, that's how we learn. So I think there's a lot in there that, uh, organizations can, can learn from as far as really energizing those employees and empowering them to continuously improve their processes.

Speaker 3   00:08:11   It sounds like what you're saying, Shane is that you are, you're enabling them to reach their potential. And they're the ones who know what they need to do every day, because they're the ones doing it. Right. And, and they know where the barriers are. They know what they want to be more easy and more, more, uh, more simple for them to follow. Um, and so they know it it's, it's your, your role is to enable them to do it even better.

Speaker 2   00:08:35   Yeah. Spot on.

Speaker 1   00:08:37   So Shayna, I noticed in your LinkedIn profile, and this is we're going to go to that CGI wheel. I built this kind of CII wheel that people can see on the screen, um, after talking to Shane and he kind of modified it fo --

-- r me, but basically there's this continuous improvement wheel and the people, those frontline, those employees are right at the center of it. And then there's spokes that go out from it. But one of the, um, the spokes on the wheel, Shane is empowerment. I think it's number three. And you say in your LinkedIn profile that the people who do that work every day must be allowed to fail. Right. And like, we're, we seem to be so afraid of failure even now. Right. But you say they have to be allowed to fail as long as it's done fast forward and in a fashion where they're always learning from that failure.

Speaker 2   00:09:30   Absolutely. Absolutely.

Speaker 1   00:09:32   So how many companies allow their teams to, to take some chances and fail

Speaker 2   00:09:39   In my experience? Not enough. And I, and I think here's where one of the disconnects really is. Um, you you'll have organizations that say, yes, we're empowering our people. Yes. We, we TA we completely buy into the concept of people are at the center of everything we do and how we improve. Um, and, and, but then what happens is I think they're so afraid of the failing side of it. And, you know, whereas they would let consultants internal or external come in and fail more. They almost feel like it's an experiment when they do really empower their frontline employees. So as soon as they see that, that first failure, it's almost that default to, well, Nope, this isn't going to work. You know, we, we need to switch up how we're doing here. Um, and, and I, I talked to a lot of folks that are, that are former and current Toyota folks, and a lot of people comment on Toyota and Toyota production system and how, you know, it really is the, the center of it is people and, and, you know, the leaders kind of just back off and let them do their thing.

Speaker 2   00:10:52   But what I constantly remind people is it's taken decades for Toyota to get as mature as they are. It's, it's, they've made mistakes. W when you talk to even some of the sensei's out there there's has been, you know, 30, 40 years at Toyota, they will, they will laugh and tell you about some of the mistakes they've made. So, you know, it takes time. There is no easy button, you can definitely learn from the failures. Um, you know, but I, I, you know, there, there's a quote by Michael Jordan. I love, and he talks about all the game winning shots he's missed, you know, all, all the free throws he's missed. And he said, I've failed time and time again. And that's made every difference as to why I'm as successful as I am. Uh, and I think organizations need to do that as well.

Speaker 1   00:11:38   And do you have to track that failure and learn, like you said, you have to learn from those failures let's absolutely. Okay. So let's talk a little bit about, about the continuous improvement wheel. Now, the very first, um, spoke it is the leadership. So let's go through the wheel, Shane, as we discussed it in the past, and you explain what each spoke on the wheel does.

Speaker 2   00:12:01   Yeah. So to me, obviously, you've got the, your employees at the center, but that, that first one is really leadership engagement. Uh, and I used the term engagement purposely. It, it can't be, I hear a lot of people say leadership support. That's not going to get it right. It can't be, well, the leaders support what we're doing. It has to be, they're actively engaged. Um, you know, there's some really good, um, uh, videos and stuff out there by a gentleman named art burn, um, who was a, you know, executive leader and a true, you know, lean believer. And, and he would sit there and he would go out on floors and he would, you know, he would challenge his, his leadership on concepts, um, that are, that are true to, to continuous improvement. So he wasn't just talking it, he was actually challenging him on it. He, he was tracking it, right. So I think when you have active leadership, right, it all starts there because we, a lot of, a lot of us use this term, a culture of continuous improvement. Um, culture starts and ends with leadership, right? Leaders drive culture, culture, drive behavior, behavior, delivers the results, right? So if you're a leader in an organization, you don't like the culture, guess what? Look in the mirror, right. You're the one that needs to change that. So active, engaged leadership is absolutely critical for continuous improvement to be successful in an organization.

Speake --

-- r 1   00:13:36   Okay. So then the next spoke on that wheel are the, the, um,

Speaker 2   00:13:41   Uh, sorry, leadership engagement, and then employee empowerment is, yeah. And, and once again, this, this can't be well, of course, you know, we, uh, our employees can, you know, are, are empowered. Um, there, there's a story I tell frequently when I, uh, worked with an organization, uh, and it's one that everybody would know, but we went in and we started doing what we call them, process adherence, observations, PAOs, cause audit sounded a little too harsh, but basically what we're doing is we went in and, and we took the, um, the SOP, right. The standard operating procedures. And we went out on the floor and for, for about a week on multiple shifts, we just watched and we watched the employees do the process, and then we compared it to the SOP. And it was very simple if they followed it exactly in an order and didn't skip anything or anything like that, it was a, it was a go, if they skipped something, if they added their own step or missed a step, it was, it was a no-go.

Speaker 2   00:14:46   Right. Um, and when we did this, that first week, we came back with 96% fail rate, right. 96% of the time, it was a fail rate. And, you know, I'll never forget sitting with some of the executive leaders. And they said, well, we, we need to start writing people up. If they can't follow processes, then they don't need to work for us. I said, well, time out. I said, let me go show you something. And so I took him out on the floor and, and first thing I showed him was the document. The document was dated four years ago. Right. They, they had implemented new systems. So the employees, if they'd followed the, the document, they wouldn't have been able to do their job. Second, the, the employees had come up with some really good processes, right. I mean, like, world-class, the problem is they did not have a process to bring these four, the leadership as new processes.

Speaker 2   00:15:41   Right. So what you end up having is you end up having these invisible processes to leadership that that's really happening. Right. But that becomes part of the kind of sub culture of the organization, because they're like, well, you know, yeah, we have these SOP, but they're outdated. We can't get them updated. So we're just gonna do our own thing. Uh, unfortunately that doesn't always work well. Right. So, uh, anyway, that was, that was an example of where the employees, they, they weren't empowered, right. So you have to truly have the employee empowerment. And that means they're bringing ideas forward. That means there's a robust suggestion program. Right. And it means that they're the ones that are involved in the improvements.

Speaker 1   00:16:27   Now, Kevin, you've talked about this in the past where the, the CEO walks the factory floor on a regular basis and he actually talks to those people to find out what's going on. Right.

Speaker 3   00:16:39   Yeah. That's the way it needs to be. And, and I think I love that, uh, know, 96% wrong. Um, we w we're always looking at what's the 4% that we, that we're. Right. Right. And how are we using that data, uh, in order to be able to improve? And I just wrote down a thing. The reason that they're doing their own thing is because they good people and they want the company to work. They wanted to be successful. And so they have to follow the right procedures for them to be able to keep the, keep the production lines running, to keep the service running. And so, you know, the, the, the automatic reaction from the leadership as Shane has said, is that, um, Oh my God, you know, we need to write people up. They're doing the wrong thing. It's like, no, no, no, no, no, no, actually these are great people. They're really the ones who are making the changes are the ones who are the best employees that we have. Let's go and talk to them and find out what they're saying. We need to do better. Uh, and then it's following through from that. And I'm sure Shane, that's exactly the experience that you see when, when you get out there, it's like once you start to listen to these people, that's when you get them really starting to show passion and

Speaker 2   00:17:50   The engagement for the, for the company and for the role. Yeah, absolutely. There was another, um, there was another company I was, I was working for and I was, I was traveling around to different distribution centers with m --

-- y boss who was our VP of operations. And, uh, we saw something similar. We were preparing for peak, right. Which is huge. Um, we're in one of the distribution centers. And, um, you know, I had just visited there a week prior, so I knew what was going on. Um, but it, it was amazing because as I was walking around the floor in this one area that had about 10 employees, um, they, they had six different little pieces of paper that the employees had taped up themselves of internal process steps that they had developed. Right. And, and I went through and I, and I was talking to them about it.

Speaker 2   00:18:43   And I, I saw it and, you know, they kept telling me, they said, Hey, don't, you know, don't tell our boss, don't tell our boss, but this, this works a lot better than any other way. And, you know, I started having conversations. So when we came back around and my boss was there, I said, Hey, uh, I want to show you a few things. And, and I actually walked out and we showed him some of those taped pieces of paper. And he goes, this is great. He's like, the problem is the leadership. He's like the fact that they don't trust their leadership to submit it as an idea. He goes, tells me I have a leadership problem. Uh, and, and I really liked him and he addressed it very quickly. Um, but yeah, that, that to me is, is when you start seeing stuff like that, it's, it's not the people it's really not.

Speaker 1   00:19:31   So let's move on to the next, spoke on the wheel. And it's a three, which is the CIO approach or the system use. So Shane, tell us about this.

Speaker 2   00:19:39   Yeah. So, okay. So let me peel this back a couple layers. Um, I, I, we mentioned earlier that, Hey, regardless of the approach that you use, it's about people being at the center. Um, I still think it's important though, and I've done some research myself years ago, that whatever approach or system you use, it needs to be simple. It needs to be understood throughout the organization. And once again, you have to have the leaders bought in and engaged with whatever that approach is. Um, now I've been in some organizations where that approach was lean and it was understood that we were leveraging lean. We messaged it that way. We were very clear. We made sure people understood what that meant. Right. But, but it had to be lean where I've seen organizations get in trouble is where you have different and almost competing approaches within the same organization.

Speaker 2   00:20:39   And that just can't work. Right. It, it, whatever approach you're gonna take. And, and I've been in organizations where our approach was pretty much all of the above. We used a little bit of lean. We use some six Sigma, we use some agile, right. Um, and as I was building out the continuous improvement program, I kept being quizzed by different leaders. You know, Shane, is it going to be lean? Is it going to be six Sigma is again. And I said, I kept saying yes to all of them, right. Because what I knew I'd done my homework on the organization. In my first 30 days, I got to know the culture and what they were doing is, is a lot of the leaders were looking for an end to challenge the approach that we were using lean won't work here because we're not automotive six Sigma won't work here because, well, we're not GE or Motorola. So I found that just staying agnostic to the approach and in leveraging, you know, bits and pieces, right. Was the best approach, but everybody understood that's what we were doing. And they understood the main pillars of the system that we were using. So whatever the system is that you're going to use, make sure it's simple, make sure everybody's clear on the approach and make sure that all the leadership is aligned and moving in the same direction.

Speaker 1   00:21:55   Okay. So then the next one, um, is for which is training. So that's, uh, that's internal and, and external training, I guess. Yeah.

Speaker 2   00:22:06   When we talk about training and this is something else, that's this gotten some, uh, some really interesting responses, um, and, um, training is critical. And, and I hear folks that say, well, we, we focus too much on training when it comes to continuous improvement. And I always say, okay, so when you started with algebra or trig, or, you know, pick a subject, you know, you had to be trained in some way, right. And if we're saying people were at the center of it, you have to train them, you have to emp --

-- ower them, you have to coach them. Um, so my preference in training, um, is that you do some training to ensure people understand the approach that you're taking and the, the fundamentals of continuous improvement, right? What are those main fundamentals and things like visual management, and then any subsequent training I like to be done.

Speaker 2   00:23:03   And I call it in the line of the work, right. Or in the line of the improvement. So if you're going to do a Kaizen event, guess what, that's the time to bring that team together and train them specifically on the tools and the techniques you're going to use in Kaizen. And then they're empowered, they're engaged. And they go, and if you think about what we're trying to do with continuous improvement and build a culture of it, if you start doing the, these Kaizen plans and start doing various projects where you're training people, um, in the line of the work, and you're doing some of the foundational training, it doesn't take long before all of a sudden you have a workforce that's trained, right? And, and, and then you can offer some of the additional, um, you know, maybe some green belt or black belt, or some of the specialty training where I see organizations get in trouble.

Speaker 2   00:23:57   Sometimes they'll say, well, we want 10% of our workforce to be black belt trained. And we want a 20% to be green belt trained. And then training becomes a number. Let's just get them trained. And by getting them trained, it's going to be like this magic pill that all of a sudden they're going to be, you know, they're going to do things better, but guess what, if they do the training and then they don't get to actually use it, they're going to lose it. Right. So it's gotta be done. It's gotta be in a thoughtful way. And, and it's gotta be done. There's the foundational piece. And then there's the elements that you do in the line of the work.

Speaker 1   00:24:35   Right. Well, most people do learn by doing right. I mean, you can be told, but then you got to do it. So, okay. So let's talk about the final spoke on the wheel, which is the subject matter experts. And these are internal and external. And I assume eventually that trickles down to right down to that frontline employee, they eventually become known as a subject matter expert.

Speaker 2   00:24:59   It does. It does. And, um, you know, once again, it is going to sound counterintuitive for what I do for a living. Um, but I, I really believe that, um, and there's organizations that have an internal group of, of CIA experts. There's some that use external, and there's some that use a combination of both. Uh, and, and I've seen each of those, um, methods work, but there's a couple of things you got to keep in mind, number one, you can't make that office or that group so big that it feels like they're swarming in there fixing things. And then they're swarming back out because then, you know, you're not gonna have the frontline employees engaged. You're not going to have the buy-in right. So it's, it just becomes an exercise. Uh, I saw another organization, uh, years ago that I was actually interviewing with, for a CIO position at the time.

Speaker 2   00:25:54   Um, and I, and I had a lot of respect for where this organization had been from a continuous improvement history. Um, but as I was doing it, they're walking me through the plant and I saw this, uh, this older Japanese gentlemen walking around and pointing to things and he'd say something in Japanese. And, you know, I asked the inter the interview. I said, Hey, what, you know, what is, um, I'm curious, what is that? And he goes, Oh yeah, that's a world-class program. We've been doing for years where we bring over a Japanese since they, uh, and what he's doing is he's walking around the facility pointing and saying waste, fix that. And I said, okay, I don't even know what to say, but I ended up obviously not taking job. Um, but it, it can't be that way. It has to be an, a group of subject matter experts that are going to help with the training.

Speaker 2   00:26:52   They're going to help with the coaching. And here's something, a lot of people I think, miss out on, they need to coach leaders too. Because when we talk about leaders being actively engaged, um, leaders, especially when you talk about executive leaders, they're extremely busy. And I think you can't expect other than very few of them, that they're going to be experts in --

-- continuous improvement. So this group of subject matter experts, they need to coach the leaders on what they need to be doing on a daily basis and what they need to be saying, right. So they're really coaching those leaders on how to coach their subordinates and all the way down on what it means to build this culture of continuous improvement. So that's, it's a really vital piece of it. And once again, I was just having a discussion with a, um, a fellow continuous improvement professional the other day.

Speaker 2   00:27:53   And he said, well, at this company, that's, world-class in continuous improvement. Um, you know, we, we don't really have that office anymore. And I said, yeah, but the key phrase is anymore 20 years ago, when you started, you did have that office. And I would be willing to bet that without that office, you wouldn't be where you were today. So yes, you, you probably worked yourself out of a job, which is what I look at my role as a lot of times is eventually if I'm doing my job, right, I should be working myself out of a job.

Speaker 1   00:28:26   So Kevin, you do this sort of work all the time, right. You're working with the leadership team, you're working with the frontline team. You're actually, you're actually that link that, that brings the two of them together, right?

Speaker 3   00:28:37   Yeah. Specifically with the leadership team. And because I find that Shane has mentioned that that's the critical link. If the leadership's not engaged and the processes that you need to have changed, don't get changed. And it's a leadership that are looking across functions. So I never believe in doing things for people when they can do it for themselves. And so that's not leadership, and that's what, that's not what leaders are needed to be there for you. If people can do it or can figure it out themselves, then they ought to be allowed to figure it out for themselves. So the leaders are doing, it's the parts that those people in their positions cannot do. They can't do it without some significant leadership or help and support. And that's what the lead is there for. And so yes, absolutely critical that the processes that need to be changed, that the people can't change themselves need to be actively changed by the leadership team. And I think that's a key role of leadership.

Speaker 1   00:29:33   Shane, have you ever run into a problem where, where that, that leadership team or a member of the leadership team wasn't to

Speaker 3   00:29:43   Allow for that empowerment of their, their team members?

Speaker 2   00:29:48   I have, unfortunately. Um, and, and I think it, it normally falls into, um, and, and, and a lot of times I don't, I don't blame the leaders. I blame more of either how they were educated or, or how they were trained over the years. Right. And it's, it's really interesting when, you know, when we're leaders and I've been through a lot of training on, on leadership. And normally it focuses on as a leader, I'm a, a leader of people. So when I have a problem, I have a people problem, right. We don't tell leaders that they lead processes and that a lot of times they, they have process problems, right? So you have leaders that often, you know, let's be honest, they're dealing with firefight and they're dealing with problems on a daily basis. And they tend to default to a lot of those problems are the root causes people, right?

Speaker 2   00:30:47   They're not thinking process, they're thinking people. So I think what happens is it, it almost trains them that well, if I have all these problems, I mean, I'm constantly dealing with HR and all these issues. And, you know, I've got to look at this and I'm in this meeting looking at this, and man, I've just got major people problems, then why should I empower my people? Right. They're, they're the kind of the crux of the problem. And, and they're looking at it all wrong, right? It should be, the people are the answer to your process problems, right. If you would leverage your people more, right. And, and Daniel pink and drive talks about, you know, how do you, how do you really notch it up and engage that workforce? And it's about seeing the people as masters of what they do, giving them the autonomy to do it, and then them understanding the purpose of what they do. Those three elements. If you can do those three things, your workforce is, is just that engagement level is going to go through the roof. So unfortunat --

-- ely I've seen, um, too many leaders that kind of missed that part. So, um, once again, I think that's why those subject matter experts are so important to open their eyes up and say, Hey, no, you, you have a process problem. You, you need to engage your employees to fix that problem. And, and, you know, let me show you how right, let me coach you on that.

Speaker 3   00:32:12   And I love this idea about the people being professionals. And, uh, quite often when we think about professionals. So even when I talk about it in organizations, people feel a little bit embarrassed. Like me, a professional is like, but when we're talking about professional footballers, we expect them. But professional soccer players are professional rugby players. We expect them to be training, right? You wouldn't expect to watch your team as a professional team and, and have people never training or, uh, the leaders not really you're changing the processes so that they can win the game. That's exactly what we expect of professionals. Yet. When we talk in the manufacturing industry about the guy running the line is a professional, it people, or everyone's kind of seems like a little bit embarrassed. They're like, Oh, that, that that's not really me, but we are paying you to do a job, right? Therefore we need you to do a really good job. And the only way you can do a really good job as if you are both given the autonomy to be able to do that job and the training and the help and support that's required to do it. Um, I'm, I'm really interested in how you, what's the terminology that you use with people that helps them see the importance of the frontline workers.

Speaker 2   00:33:27   Yeah. I think what I've tried to do Kevin over the years is I spend a lot of time with those, those frontline workers. Um, one of the distribution companies I've worked for, you know, peak right. Between, you know, you start getting in November and December, the workforce grows eight to 10 X of what they normally are, right. It's probably 70 to 80% of the revenue for the year. And, you know, one, it was, you know, 25 different distribution centers in North America. And, you know, it seemed like every few days I was at another one, right. Trying to help put out fires. But you know, what I would always do is as I would get there, the first thing I would do is I'd go out on the floor. And I talked to the people, right. And some of the leaders would, would quite honestly get mad at me.

Speaker 2   00:34:14   You know? I mean, my boss was our global ops of, uh, global VP of operations. And I'm like his right hand. And here I am coming into their building and I don't even come say hi to them. First, I go straight out and start talking to the hourly associates. Um, but what I would do with every time is I'd go out and I'd go out on the floor. And, uh, I had some really skilled folks over the years, kind of coach me on this within a few minutes of just going out and looking and watching and talking to employees, you can figure out what's going on, right. If you watch, and if you listen, you can figure it out quick. Right. So then what I would do is go back and get the leaders and, and bring them out on the floor with me. Right.

Speaker 2   00:34:57   And say, Hey, come here, let's go talk to a couple of folks. Well, no, let's go back in the office. I said, no, no, no, no, come on. Let's go out here, come on. And, and what starts to happen is it's, it's that, you know, almost that act of coaching and it starts to, it starts to get contagious, right. Because they go out and it's like a light comes on and then they start doing it. Right. So all of a sudden, as the executive leaders in the organization start coming in buildings, you start to see less time in the boardroom and more time out on the floor, actively engaged with employees and it becomes contagious. And then that's when the real magic starts happening.

Speaker 1   00:35:40   So it's kind of like a show and tell, come with me. I want to show and tell you what's going on here. So, Shane, what are you looking for when you go out there on the floor that first time when you walk into the factory?

Speaker 2   00:35:54   Yeah, I'll be honest. One of the first things I look for is, um, I, I, uh, I look at the engagement of the employees, right? How engaged are they? I look at things like standard work and the documents maybe that they have, that that helps them with the process. Um, it, it sounds o --

-- dd, but I actually, I actually did go out on to the restroom on the floor quite a bit, because that tells me a lot about the organization and, and what's really happening. Um, you know, how clean is it, how, you know, attention to detail is it, you know, uh, I go to the break area and I just kind of listen in and you know, it, it, it, to me, it's so much fun because you're really putting your finger on the pulse of the organization. I, I can give me 20 minutes out on the floor doing that type of thing. I can tell you more about that organization than entire day sitting in a boardroom with executives.

Speaker 1   00:36:52   Kevin, do you have a comment?

Speaker 2   00:36:54   A hundred percent agree. It's the same thing. You know, when I walk into a factory, you're trying to get the smell of the place. And, and it's, it's really, for me, it's looking at the different waste streams. There's the cleanliness of the equipment it's, as you said, it's the way that the people are talking. And, uh, I love that idea of, uh, being in the restrooms and in the, and in the Kenzie, you know, the restaurant as I, as I would prefer it to be, um, because that really does have a good indicator on how the leadership team is treating the frontline employees. And hence how the frontline employees are going to be paying the leadership back.

Speaker 1   00:37:30   I know that, sorry, go ahead. Shape. Go ahead.

Speaker 2   00:37:33   Yeah. Uh, two funny stories, one, uh, I was in a, uh, I was in one organization and once again, everywhere I've been has been like a lot of travel. So I'm, I'm in this one and I'm sitting in there and in the, um, in the break area, they had this little, it's like a little basketball game where you kind of shoot the basketball and you try to score. And I always go in and do that if they've got something like that, right. Some kind of just something different. Um, and, and I'm not doing it because, you know, I don't want to talk to people or I don't, you know, you might say, well, Shane, come on, you've got better things to do with your time. I look for a couple of things. One, I, I look to see, um, how quickly employees are gonna come up to me and start just talking to me or, uh, you know, just checking my score or maybe making fun of my bad shooting.

Speaker 2   00:38:22   Um, because once again, that, that one that gives me, uh, an in, right, because I, I don't want to be seen as this corporate entity that's coming in to tell them how to do things, right. I have to be seen as one of them, right. From everything, from what I wear to, to how I talk to, to doing things like that. Um, so, you know, I, I was doing that and I was sitting there playing for about not even five minutes this one time. And then, and this lady comes up and starts talking to me and, you know, she starts making fun of my shooting and saying that her boyfriend scored a lot higher than I did. And then he comes up and me and him start to play a little bit, um, you know, kind of one-on-one. And before I knew it, there were about 20 people around us.

Speaker 2   00:39:04   Right. And I I'll tell you the, the amount of engagement and ideas and that I got from that organization from that 10 minutes, just sitting there doing that. Um, and then the other thing I like to do is if an organization has multiple levels, I was taught once again, coached by someone early on, go to the highest level and just sit down and watch and watch the flow and see how people were moving. Um, and, and I was doing that and at one site, uh, with another organization and, uh, the general manager came in, he goes, Hey, what's going on, Shane? And he started, I said, hang on. And, and he, it was like this awkward silence for another minute or two. He goes, what are you doing? And, and I said, um, I said, I think you've got an issue right over here in this area. Um, you got a little bottleneck and, and he just kind of looked and he looked at me and, um, anyway, once again, it was just a way to engage. And, and once again, that's with one of the leaders and, and I had only met this guy one time before I'd talked a few times on the phone, but just by doing that, um, instant, right. I mean, built instant rapport. And, and from that point on, just had a really great partnership.

Speaker 1   00:40:23   Hmm. I gotta be cognizant of your time, cause I know you have to go Shane, but I do have a couple more questions for you. And I think, um, you said earli --

-- er on that you, you always try to work or work your way out of a job. So I wanna know what it is you actually love about what you do.

Speaker 2   00:40:41   Um, I, I think first and foremost is the people, I mean, the ability to, and pre COVID, um, it's, um, a little stir crazy, cause I haven't traveled in a while and at first it was great. Cause you know, I I'm on the road most of the time and I've got a six year old son and um, so, you know, but now my wife's like, don't you have somewhere to go. Uh, so we're getting to that point it's time again. But I, I think I, I love traveling to different sites and, and just the interaction with the employees. Um, and, and I've always said this in a lot of people didn't believe me, but it's true. I learned more from them a lot of times than I feel they do from me. Um, so I think the interaction with the employees, the ability to coach leaders, um, and, and, you know, sometimes in very active way, sometimes in a more subtle way, but to coach them on some of the things we've talked about, it's, Hey, you don't have a people problem.

Speaker 2   00:41:40   You have a process problem. And when you can coach leaders to see that more clearly and to understand what to do about it, which goes back to involving employees, um, it, it, you're having just such a significant impact on organizations. And I think the third thing is, um, you know, someone, someone told me one time I, as I was coming into an organization and they said, Hey, um, so talk to me about kind of where your function is and you know, what you deal with. And after I explained it, they said, so pretty much the entire organization is your playground. And I said, yes. And I think that's what I love about it too, is on a daily basis, I get to interact with everybody, from HR to legal, to operations, to supply chain, right. And, and all up and down the organization. And there's not many people that get that luxury. So I'm, I'm truly fortunate and, and truly blessed that I'm able to, to, uh, to interact with that many people, uh, and to be able to have a positive impact on organizations in that way.

Speaker 1   00:42:53   Okay. So my final question then is what are your key takeaways for anybody watching the podcast right now, when they're looking at continuous improvement and trying to get it right?

Speaker 2   00:43:04   Yeah. Key takeaways. Um, people, people, people are at the core of everything you do. Um, don't get tripped up about methodologies, right? Figure out what you want to use or multiple methodologies and, and make it simple. But people are at the center of it. Leaders must be actively engaged and then it's about coaching and training. If you do those things and you do it well, then the chances of success will go up exponentially.

Speaker 1   00:43:40   Shane, it's been really great to talk to you. Um, you've had some great insights that I hope that you'll be willing to be on the podcast. Again. Thanks so much for joining us.

Speaker 2   00:43:50   Thank you so much, Janet. Truly enjoyed the conversation. Thanks Kevin.

Speaker 3   00:43:55   Now we're sharing thing. Thank you very much. And I love, I love when people ha have the bravery to take on a coach. You know, the, the best players in the world always have a coach. And, uh, the fact that you're out there, you really know your stuff well, and you've got such an open heart willing to help people, um, you know, just keep doing what you're doing.

Speaker 2   00:44:17   Thank you. I appreciate it.

Speaker 1   00:44:19   Shane Wentz is a certified lean six Sigma master black belt. He is the co-owner of a change in latitude consulting. And Kevin Snook is a leadership advisor. He's also the author of best-selling book, make it right. Five steps to align your manufacturing business from the frontline to the bottom line. You can find the maker, right podcast on iTunes, Google play, Stitcher, Spotify, and YouTube. And thanks to Kevin and to Shane I'm Janet Eastman. Thanks for listening to make it right.

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