

Leading and Focusing Improvement

# CHALLENGES

# Challenge

**What are you striving to achieve?**

**Why is it important for this  
to be clear?**

# A Historic Example

## True North:

**“The USA will be the undisputed world leader in space exploration and technology.”**

## Challenge:

**“I believe that this nation should commit itself, to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon, and returning him safely to the Earth.”**

# A Historic Example

## Context: On May 25, 1961

- The USA had a total of *15 minutes* of manned space flight experience. (The *world* had 105 minutes.)
- 25% of rocket launches blew up.

# A Historic Example

- Lots of people had been working on “space” since the 1950’s.
- Lots of people were working on lots of problems.
- What did setting the challenge accomplish?

# A Historic Example

- What problems had to be solved? What had to be learned?
  - Can we build a spacesuit and work outside the spacecraft?
  - Can one spacecraft find and dock with another?
  - Can people survive for two weeks in space without serious problems?
- And we had to design and build a really big rocket, and a place to launch it from.

# A Historic Example

- What problems did ***not*** have to be solved?
  - Can we construct a rocket in orbit?
  - Can we build a rocket big enough for “direct landing and ascent?”
  - Can we construct a base on the moon?
  - Can we develop an air-breathing booster?
- While interesting, none of these problems was an *obstacle to meeting the challenge*. **They could wait.**

# “True North” - Vision of the Ideal



Guides the general direction.



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Guides the general direction.

**“Vision” alone is vague, and difficult to action.**

**Simply educating people on “the vision” does not give them a direction.**

- They will see “problems” and “waste” everywhere they look.
- Which ones are important to work on?

# Which problems are most important?

Excess Inventory

Push Scheduling

Cumbersome Computer Interfaces

Poor Visual Management

Variable Demand

Too much walking

Changeovers

Variable Work Cycles

Informal Work Instructions

Quality Fallout

Human Effors

Current Condition



Long Conveyers

Variable WIP

No Kanban

Unreliable Equipment

No 5S

# Which problems are most important?



# A Challenge Aligns the Effort

- Something important to the organization.
- *Might* be a *hoshin* in a more developed process.
  - ...but *hoshin* planning is not *necessary* for a challenge.

**“100% On time delivery.”**

**“Similar product quotes within 2 days.”**

**“Reduce cycle time by 30%.”**



# “Eliminating Waste” *is a result.*

- “Eliminate waste” is not the challenge.
- There is no direction or goal.
- Wasteful activities are removed as a *result* of solving the problems between you and the goal.
- There are *too many* opportunities to simply “eliminate waste.” The effort is dissipated and unfocused.

# The Toughest Management Decision

**A specific challenge empowers people by giving them permission NOT to try to work on *everything*.**



# Question:

If you asked an improvement team *today*, “What is your challenge?”

Or, in plain language – what are you striving to achieve, and how will you know you’ve done it?

**What would  
they tell you?**

Maybe a good homework assignment?