CASE STUDY

How A Manufacturer Broke Down Silos and Unlocked a 21% Increase in Throughput

Most manufacturers double down on process when execution stalls; This company did the opposite. By tackling culture first, the CEO and COO unlocked a surge in performance no one saw coming.

The leaders thought they had a productivity problem. What they *actually* had was a collaboration problem.

Their departments? Full of talented & highly skilled people. Processes? Fine. Equipment? State-of-the-art. But when it came to getting things done across teams? Not so much.

Like many companies, this organization had a siloed culture. Problems got passed between departments, and when something went wrong, employees ran them up the chain or over to HR. Firefighting diverted leaders from focusing on growth and improvement. They knew things could run better. But what was it really costing them?

THE REVELATION:
Culture and Mindsets are the real Bottlenecks

With a training grant in mind, leadership took a hard look at what their people actually needed. They wanted to revisit Lean, it had been attempted pre-COVID but the principles never stuck.

And then it hit them. No amount of optimization would take hold if people weren't working together.

So instead of throwing more process at the problem, they did what most manufacturers don't and went all in on culture.

All leadership functions received customer centric training, and the entire company went through the Respect for People Roadmap.

THE TRANSFORMATION:
Small Shifts, Big Wins

Within 8 months of launch, the company achieved a 21% increase in output and a culture of continuous improvement began to emerge organically.

+21%

The kicker? They hadn't even fully implemented Lean yet.

THE
Respect for
People ROADMAP™

THE BOLD MOVE: A Company-Wide Cultural Overhaul

Most companies fix culture like you would fix a leaky pipe, patch one area at a time. Maybe they send leadership to an offsite retreat. Maybe they do a one-time workshop. This organization? They enlisted everyone from the executive team to the shop floor.

It was a radical decision in the history of the company.

"I've never started a Lean transformation with culture before - never proactively tried to change how people interact. We had always started with tools, and changed the culture as we went along," said the COO.

"This program also didn't exist before, and given that culture is the foundation for Lean, we thought it made sense."

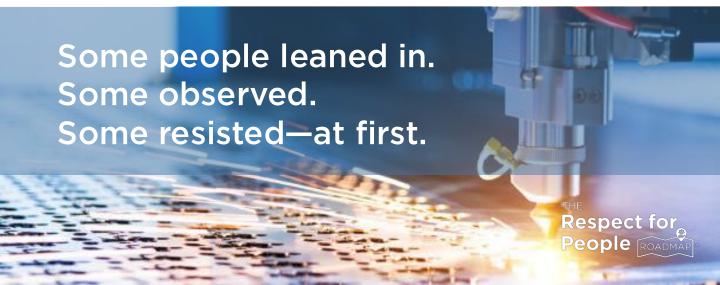## THE ROLLOUT: Turning Skeptics into Advocates

Predictably, not everyone was thrilled.

Some leaders balked at the time commitment. Managers worried about downtime. Employees? Split by role:

- Office staff bought in quickly appreciating the investment in their development.

- The production floor, 80% of the workforce, pushed back hard. What did communication have to do with their responsibilities? Are you trying to tell us that we don't respect one another?"

Rather than force it, leaders played it smart:

- **They built a volunteer army**. Interested employees became internal champions, bringing others along naturally.

- **They modeled from the top.** Executives completed the program first, showing they weren't just pushing another mandate.

- **They made it real.** incremental learning allowed employees to apply new behaviors immediately—on the floor, in meetings, in problem-solving sessions, and at home.

Some people leaned in.
Some observed.
Some resisted—at first.

THE SHIFT: From Every Person for Themselves to Collective Impact

A few months into the rollout, workplace dynamics began shifting. More employees considered the upstream and downstream implications of their work. Issues were no longer viewed in isolation but as part of a larger system. Problems that once were passed n to managers and leaders were increasingly resolved at the source, within and even across teams.

Employees reported personal transformations. They weren't just applying these principles at work; they were bringing them home.

"I didn't expect people to talk about how this program changed them as individuals," the COO reflected. "People told us they were communicating better with their spouses, their families, their neighbors. That's not something you expect from a workplace training."

For the CEO, the impact was personal as well: "I've stopped myself before reacting more times than I can count. I've paused before responding to an email, asked clarifying questions, taken a moment to breathe before making a decision. This program has changed how I show up as a leader."

The most striking transformation? Employees once considered "challenging" have become proactive contributors.

"I've seen changes in people that you normally only attribute to major life events, and I wasn't expecting that," the COO said.

THE PAYOFF: Culture as Performance Amplifier

Culture isn't an abstract concept, it's an operational advantage. And when it's done right, it doesn't just change how people feel about work.

It changes what they can *achieve*.

A limited rollout might have led to pockets of improvement, but true organizational change requires alignment at every level.

By engaging the whole company, leaders ensured that proactive communication, accountability, and collaboration weren't just isolated best practices, they became the company's default way of operating.

Less than 12 months since launch, the company is already achieving bottom-line impact that most companies spend years chasing.

21% increase in average daily throughput—not from CI tools or software, but from better collaboration and proactive problem-solving.

Employee lead daily team huddles — keeping teams aligned and resolving issues before they escalate.

Improved effectiveness —problems once funneled up the chain are increasingly solved at the source.

THE
Respect for People ROADMAP™

THE BOTTOM LINE: When you invest in people, everything changes

The leaders didn't just improve engagement; they rewired how the company functions. And in doing so, they are building the foundation for long-term success.

Asked if they would do it again, the CEO answers, "in a heartbeat".

If you're wondering whether it's worth tackling your company's culture, the CEO's take is confident, "Why wouldn't you?"

"We invest in technology and new equipment, but when you invest in your people; when you empower them and create the conditions where they can thrive, growing the business becomes that much easier."

— CEO, Manufacturing Company.

THE LESSONS LEARNED: What Every Organization Should Know

While the program was a success, the leaders point to the following considerations for implementation:

- **Prepare participants –** Give people time to prepare mentally and logistically for what some might initially see as another thing on their plate.

- **Leadership buy-in is essential.** Leadership participation speaks volumes and demonstrates commitment to change.

- **Timing is everything –** Running too many cohorts from one area of the business can put a strain on operations. Plan accordingly.

- **Skepticism and doubt are normal –** While some will balk at the program purpose or themes, given time most participants come around.

Ready to bring The Respect for People Roadmap to your organization?

Start your journey to Better today at:
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