

# BEING LEAN

*Everyday Lean  
Systems Thinking  
Flexibility  
Modular Everything!  
Accountability  
Subjective Time Dilation*

*Say What You Do.  
Do What You Say*

*Business Case  
Reality Check  
Smart Choices  
Resting Heart Rate  
Types of Procrastinators  
Habits Building*

Achieve a Better Quality of Life

AT HOME

IN HEALTH

WHEN  
TRAVELLING

AT WORK

*Sustainability  
Lean Green  
Quarantine Areas  
Mindless Munching  
Reduced Trips  
Muscle Groups*

*Decision  
Fatigue*

MICHELLE  
LEONG

*Foreword by  
Daniel T. Jones*

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# Foreword

The ways of thinking described in this book are powerful and infectious. They are like new pair of spectacles revealing unseen opportunities wherever you go - at work, while travelling and at home. You will be hooked!

We discovered them studying how Toyota helps their employees produce the highest quality cars in the world. Not just in the factory but in all kinds of design, engineering and office work. These continuous improvement practices are also being used by hospitals and construction sites around the world.

But you will have fun using them at home - to free up time and reduce stress. As more

people are working remotely they provide more effective ways of working together with colleagues in distributed teams.

This book is the first step on your journey to being lean. There is much more to discover once you get going. But beware - there is no antidote to this benign infection!

*By Daniel T Jones*

*Author of The Machine that Changed the World, Lean Thinking and The Lean Strategy.*



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# INTRODUCTION

Lean is a well-known scientific approach to achieving quality outputs and has, over the decades, been adopted by more than 15 different industries to stay competitive. There is a lot about Lean and leaning oneself for work purposes, but not many apply it privately. When I started work on this book, I wanted to share how lean is applied specifically outside of work.

I thought it would be easy as I have a lot of examples and a lot to say on the subject. I found out, however, that there are still not many lean books about everyday lean living because lean is more consistently applied and more tried and tested in the workplace.

I also realised that applying lean to work is so much easier. There are many relevant examples and much expertise out there for us to learn from and even duplicate. At the same time, we are held accountable for our productivity and quality of work so we do it more consistently as it is necessary for our livelihood. We push ourselves more and we try harder. Whereas, privately, we only have to account for ourselves. There are no immediate consequences, or if there are, we deem them to be of less magnitude as time loss is less apparent than the loss of cold hard cash from a paycheque.

Like a lot of lean practitioners, I found that lean working spilled over into my personal life. Bits and pieces of lean were applied randomly, as and when, whenever I got the chance or an idea came to me. When I started out, I thought that only basic lean was applicable, but now, I find that applying it outside of work absolutely stretches my thinking and application.

There are a lot more tools and techniques to boost that outside-the-box thinking and support your Lean living. With a plethora of very good, thorough self-help, lean and improvement books out there, this is my attempt to carve out a niche. It demonstrates how one's environment can be designed through the structured use of Lean thinking and application, which can help us to get rid of wasteful processes to achieve a better quality of life, whatever that means to each one of us. We can all aspire to be a Lean leader in whatever we do. Most of us "types" who read personal development books like this one will know that leadership is not about our roles at work. Lean leadership is about thinking of the people we are responsible for all of the time, and how we can teach, train, improve and better the lives of ourselves and everyone around us. This may be at work, where we are more accustomed to thinking this way, but it is also very applicable at home with our nearest and dearest.

This book is written from a personal development point of view i.e., working from what is within our control while influencing our surroundings. The idea is to give you the thinking, tools and techniques plus A LOT of everyday examples throughout the entire book. My hope is that lean and improvement pioneers will gain food for thought from this book to improve their already advanced thinking methods. But I also want to reach out to those lean newbies to find a starting point that fits their lifestyle, skills and circumstances to aid them in deploying lean methodology to change their lives for the better. It aims to fuel the urgency of all who read it, and to help you make a start on a deliberate and structured journey in achieving that good quality of life through continuous improvement.

# THIS BOOK HAS 3 + 1 PARTS



The International Motor Vehicle Program (IMVP) was set up in the upshot of the second oil crisis in 1979 to investigate problems facing the world of motor vehicles. The IMVP's initial investigation illuded to new ideas, i.e., Toyota Production System (TPS) pioneered by the Japanese who were gaining market share.

This led to the Phase 2 research programme contributing to the book *Machine that Changed the World* by Womack, Jones and Roos in 1990, revolutionising the way that the manufacturing industry operated and the accelerated adoption of lean by demonstrating the performance difference between lean production and mass production. The term 'lean production' was coined by John Krafcik, a research member of the IMVP team in his Masters thesis, and since, popularised by the "Machine".

The book is split into two equal halves and within that, four parts. The lean philosophy and methodology have such robust and demonstrable provenance, it is inevitable that the first half should comprise of 3 parts that look at the approach, some complementary thinking plus some hard vbv tools and techniques. The injection of many practical examples aims to show readers how relevant and powerful the thinking and mindset are when they are linked to the doing. It is important to read through this part first to get the most out of the practical examples later on.

The second half of the book consists of the sizeable fourth section and is all about practical thinking and implementation. It is split into the four areas of our daily life, specifically lean thinking and its application at home, in our health, when we're travelling and at work. And with the world growing smaller and more integrated, I touch on the relevance of being a good global citizen from a lean perspective. Theories and thinking usually tend to sound formal, contrived and dry, but they provide the strong foundation required for implementation. They guide and give meaning to what we see, and provide a sound basis for practical action. Some concepts like Mistake Proofing are hard tools and techniques but I have chosen to categorise them in the thinking half as I have used them to illustrate their notions rather than as a hard tool to use in steps while carrying out physical improvement activities.

This is not a recipe book to follow; instead, it adopts an agile modular approach, facilitating you to be your own quality life coach. Certain wasteful processes in life may not be preventable. However, the leaner a thinker you are and the more equipped you are with tools and techniques, the more you will be able to manage and minimise them.

## **Simple AND Over-The-Top!**

Once you've gone through the first half of the book and you're armed with strong lean foundations, we look at the practical examples and you may be surprised about how simplistic some of them are. As a seasoned lean practitioner, it has not been easy to put pen to paper, linking and connecting theory with actions.

This is not dissimilar to when someone asks you to note in detail how you breathe or walk. That's not easy as you just do it without thinking or even being conscious of it. At the same time, some of the practical examples given may seem VERY

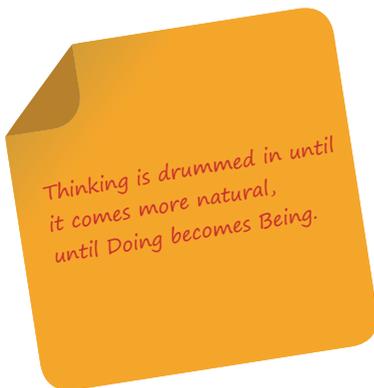
over-the-top to some of you. This is also the result of being a seasoned lean practitioner. What some may deem to be over-the-top or effortful has become like breathing and walking to me now. Effortless and automated. These over-the-top examples illustrate how the consistency of lean application has induced me to make that initial effort to improve the areas of my choice and transitioned me from Doing Lean to Being Lean. And how my system has been engineered to fit my values, allowing me to achieve the stress-free quality of life that I seek.

However, the examples are just that. To be prompt and stimulate ideas of how YOU CAN apply lean to areas more relevant to you and your interests.

BEING LEAN is fundamentally about waging war on waste to reduce it wherever you see it. Reduce and minimise waste around you to increase value to YOU. If what you read here resonates, adopt and apply it now, no excuses! This book challenges your ability to follow through.

# SOME PEOPLE ARE NATURALLY LEAN... O T

There is no such thing as naturally lean. There is doing lean, which is very different from Being Lean, which is anything but natural. There should always be science and thought behind actions. Thinking is drummed in until it comes more natural, until Doing becomes Being.



Some people are just naturally organised and efficient but lean is not just about being organised. I was haphazardly organised prior to becoming a lean practitioner, who aims to be organised in everything I do. But as stated, Lean is a philosophy and methodology to help us be more effectively efficient (organised). It is the science and thought behind the doing.

I am good at things, not because I love the activities and enjoy doing them. I know they need to be done and I NEED to find the best and easiest way to do them with as little time and effort as possible, because I dislike doing them. I also NEED to sustain the habits that I do not enjoy or there will be consequences. "But you love training!" my sister says.

I certainly do not. "But you love cleaning!" my in-laws claim. I certainly do not. What makes people think I even remotely like cleaning or training? Apparently, I display quality results and appear to be very good at making it look so easy or so they tell me.

I am very flattered at hearing this and must say it is one of my rewards for Being Lean. Who doesn't like to be perceived as being effortlessly good at things, especially if that is some what true?

I roll my eyes when I hear fitness gurus mention fun training. Build fun into your training routine and you will keep doing it. Frankly, it is impossible for me to make training fun. To me, it is nothing but a chore. I just leverage what lean has to offer to engineer the processes in my surroundings to induce the correct behaviour i.e., do things that I do not like but are necessary.

Automation and occasional rewards help maintain and sustain behaviour and results. Applying and deploying lean is key; it is not a short-cut for efficiency and efficacy are the drivers. Disciplined and efficient. We can be efficient but take the long way around, just because we didn't know there is a better way. A simple example of being organised but not lean is having a larder full of well-organised, labelled foodstuff. We all love those Instagram photos of pretty colour compatible boxes of food in the fridge. That's just simply being neat and organised.

Having the minimal of all that you need (minimal inventory and cash tied up) at any one time is lean, proven by the fact that you never need to find it, or run out to the corner shops to get something that's missing. This may sound simple, but much background work is required to develop a lean fridge system. If there is no thought or science behind the numbers and types of inventory nor the layout of the inventory etc., then organised waste is still waste, i.e., you're being efficient with wasteful processes. I've got a very functional lean(ish) fridge and a lean home, but it isn't staged or pretty like on Instagram. The same goes for all the photos of real lean living in this book, that's why they are all illustrated.

## WHAT IS **EVERYDAY LEAN**?

**Every day lean** is about everything you do in your life. When you should wake up, how you get yourself and your family up in the morning, how you make breakfast and prepare lunch, how you get dressed, mealtimes, your morning/afternoon/evening rituals, DIY work, fun time, all of work, holidays. It is about every aspect of your life and how you can do things simpler, quicker and safer, using scientific methods to help you obtain your goals without compromising on quality.

Being Lean is about constantly making everything in life a little bit better every day. No drama, we are talking about small improvements, not once, not twice, but when you "see" opportunities every single day, consistently for the rest of your life. For me, this is an extremely satisfying and rewarding way to live.

Many things bother me, big and small. If something bothers you, it's usually a sign there is waste in the process, and where there is waste, there are opportunities to improve. For most of us, as long as we are comfortably or mildly uncomfortable content, there is no urgency to be better. Things must usually get bad enough before we decide to do something about it.

Personally, it is my laziness and impatience about doing things twice or taking the long way around that fuels action. I was on auto-pilot and allowed things to keep bothering me. It was only when I understood the lean concept of waste, did I note

that it bothered me. I started asking myself what I could do about it. Whether I like it or not, whether I can do anything about it or not, I was used to waiting for meetings to start. 10 minutes here, 15 minutes there, I was not so much OK with it, but resigned that it happens. Time and again, I allowed the status quo. I got used to being wasteful with my time and wasteful with other people's time. I allowed people to encroach and steal my time, and you bet that I returned the (dis)favour.

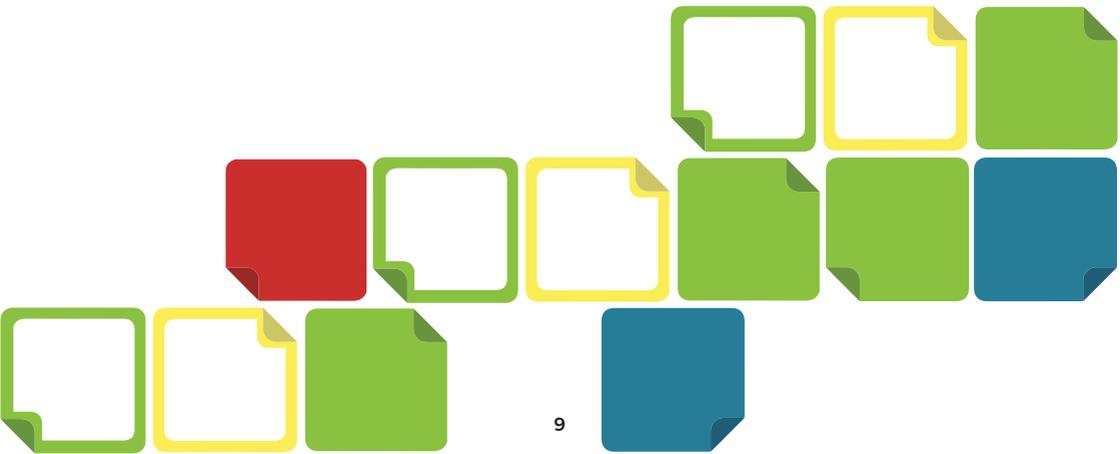
Before I was Lean at home, I was blind to waste outside of work. I was OK with forgetting to plan what to eat, and ended up stuffing myself with anything I could find or would compromise the quality of my meal because I didn't have all the necessary ingredients. I was OK with wasting 15 minutes popping into the corner shop to get ginger that I didn't have for a dish.

I used to strive so hard to be productive and efficient at work but seemed unable to do the same at home or in my personal life at first. It's because, back then, I didn't see the bigger picture. Big things that bother us are usually systemic and we, as individuals, potentially have little influence or control over them. But everyday lean is about first being able to see wasteful processes and starting small with things that we can do something about. This inevitably spills out into all areas of our life, making us an all-round effectively efficient person.

Here's a very simple example of everyday lean. I am an avid everyday cook. I noticed that I use onion powder and garlic powder a lot in my cooking. I always have to first shake some onion powder and then some garlic powder into my dry rubs or many other dishes. I noticed that I use onion and garlic every time. So, to reduce a process step, I made a shaker of onion and garlic powder (proportioned the way I like it, slightly more onion than garlic). Once I had done that, I realised that I used salt too. So, for another small step improvement, I added salt to that onion/garlic shaker and eliminated another process step. Every little bit counts, right? Once I saw the power of "consolidation", I went around the house to see what other quick-wins I could get.

Many will be asking what's the point in saving five minutes? You will find a more scientific and in-depth explanation in the time management and standardisation chapter, but for me, it is an indoctrination that every second counts and is precious. For top athletes, to break records, all you need is a fraction of a second. In the manufacturing world, a second or a minute along each step of the production line can produce an extra few units for sale. For me, finding 10 minutes to sit on the couch and catch the weather or joyfully plan which pub to visit over the weekend is happiness and invaluable.

On the other hand, saving 10 minutes in a process may be pointless if it is not enough to accomplish your next task. You will need to find enough time savings to make it worthwhile, or plan in an activity to fit in the minutes you have saved. This is part of what lean thinking, tools and techniques can do. It helps you decide what improvements to take on and if they are worth doing or not.



**PART**

**01**

**LEAN**

**as a**

**STRUCTURED  
APPROACH**

**TO IMPROVE**

**quality of life**