

# How to Choose a Lean Consultant

## LOOK FOR THESE CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

**IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCE:** Three or four successful client companies is NOT sufficient. Companies and industries vary significantly, and so do the implementation techniques. Look for someone who's successfully done it in at least 20-30 plants, in as diverse a set of industries as possible.

**CAVEAT:** Experience is of little value if it resides in a person who is not actively engaged in YOUR company's transition. Beware the cadre of green MBA's! Demand that the "gurus" be intimately involved.

**RESULTS, RESULTS, RESULTS!** What did your prospective consultant's previous clients actually accomplish? What kinds of clients have they worked with? How long did it take to realize these gains? What was the net value generated? Minimum ROI's should exceed 10 to 1.

**Caveat:** Look out for the "microcosm trick". It's very easy to generate big results in one small area. What kind of results did they generate for the TOTAL COMPANY?

**MATURITY / CREDIBILITY:** A successful change agent must have the ability to convince people at all levels of the organization. Lots of consultants can do an adequate job on the shop floor. Make sure your mentor can be effective in the boardroom as well.

**CORPORATE EXECUTIVE EXPERIENCE:** Look out for the "purist." Your sensei must be grounded in real-world business realities. There is no better way to gain this perspective than to have "served time" as a senior executive in a manufacturing enterprise. "Those that can... Do. Those that can't... Teach" Find someone who has proven he / she can "DO."

**ACTION BIAS:** I recall a plant that I visited. They'd been "transitioning to lean" for 14 months. The total result: a notebook full of data! Don't pay for "studies". Pay for results. A good lean consultant should be continuously pushing your company. DO IT! DO IT NOW!

**PROCESS:** Look for a consultant that has a proven overall process. One that will generate not only substantial quick returns, but will also enforce a culture of continuous improvement. Beware the "solution looking for a problem" approach.

**VALUE VS. COST:** Consultants come in all shapes, sizes, and capabilities. Literally anyone can "hang out a shingle" and claim to be an expert. However, like the other professions, the best value is generally NOT the least expensive. When attempting to make the difficult transition to World Class operating practices, the "low-cost bidder" can save you thousands of dollars, ... And quite literally cost you millions. This is "open heart surgery" for your company. Hire the best.