

BY KIM HUMPHREY

# Leading with **heart**

## Southeastern Region Heartbeat Leaders workshop encourages lean champions

**W**hat makes a dream team? How do my “Heartbeat Leaders” lead? Why isn’t my lean focus producing great results? Why don’t my people get it? Why do some teams seem to perform flawlessly given almost any situation, while others fail miserably on even the simplest tasks? How often do thoughts like this occur?

In January, 40 people from Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS), Vulcan Industries and Celgard participated in a two-day Lean Champions training event hosted by NNS at the Peninsula Workforce Development Center in Hampton, Virginia, to address these challenges and learn how to be “Heartbeat Leaders.” Joe Barto, founder and president of TMG and AME Southeastern Region director, facilitated this interactive session and provided valuable tools in lean and six sigma, Heartbeat Leadership and team performance improvement. On day two, Doug Smith, director of performance improvement training for TMG, provided training tools and exercises in lean and six sigma.

“It’s been exciting to hear shipbuilders’ ideas and see the deployment of heartbeat leadership and lean principles and practices,” said Rob Hogan, vice president of supply chain management and operations for NNS. “You can really see how each

group’s efforts impact the organization. We really are a big team with many, many smaller teams across our business.”

In this interactive training, attendees discussed why companies have the best lean toolkits, but still aren’t achieving

world-class performance. Everyone agreed that we use our kits in pursuit of quality, delivery, safety and cost perfection, but we just aren’t seeing the expected results. We implement lean, typically focused on shop kaizens, and communicate that our people are important, but we



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Joe Barto, founder and president of TMG and AME Southeast Region director, led day one of the interactive session.



Workshop attendees toured the Peninsula Workforce Development Center and its technical capabilities.

continue to struggle with silos, “managing” issues and control.

What are the missing links? Some would argue that it is the respect for people. Others might say that successful lean initiatives require management to adopt an inspirational leadership approach, which requires a profound cultural and organizational change. Others state that high-performance teams must always be on the journey to consistent, near perfect, performance. And perhaps, as the instructors stressed, it is the combination of respect for people, and inspirational Heartbeat Leadership that truly guides the team to perfection.

### Perfection

So what does perfect look like? What do we, as leaders, need to do to achieve perfection? First, we have to ask ourselves: “Are we leaders or managers?” People are led by leaders who are focused on people, doing the right things, inspiring, influencing and motivating, whereas processes are managed by managers who are focused on things, doing things right, planning, organizing, directing and control. The second question then is, “Do we really want to lead?” If we really do not want to lead, then no training program will ever produce results.

### Trust

We found we also have to address our core beliefs. Are we making easy things hard or hard things easy? Do we believe people are good and want to do the right thing? And finally, do we believe our employees trust us? Sustainable change requires complete trust. Leadership in continuous improvement is all about changing behaviors, which requires that our teams trust that we, as leaders, are doing this for the right reason.

Barto pointed out that Heartbeat Leaders must always provide clear direction, appropriate resources, expert advice, feedback and coaching, growth opportunities, reward and praise and fair treatment. In return, these leaders usually see employees who treat the company

## “Earn your leadership every day.”

MICHAEL JORDAN

like their own, hold each other accountable, give early warnings of problems and have the courage to ask questions.

### Engagement

How does the Heartbeat Leader encourage engaged team members? They solicit opinions and input and communicate, communicate, communicate!

Ironically, 58 percent of leaders never receive any training. Barto cited that studies show that new leaders wish they had gotten training on topics such as managing employee conflict, motivating teams, providing effective feedback and finding resources. In addition, Barto stated that 54 percent of new leaders would take a demotion to a non-leadership position if they could retain their current salary, and only 10 percent felt prepared to meet current challenges. Heartbeat Leadership requires engaging all team members in order to achieve perfection.

### Successful leadership

Most of us have known a toxic leader. They rarely take the blame or share glory. They are not toxic all the time or to all people, and they are never toxic when in the company of the boss. They are charming when the occasion fits and are frequently described as extremely bright and hardworking. They have a coterie of devoted “fans” who keep appearing in their staff, and most were known as toxic early on their careers. A successful Heartbeat Leader understands that toxic leadership will never be successful.

A true leader leads with integrity and knows that leadership without a goal is irrelevant. A goal without a plan encourages activity, not productivity. Leaders must plan and then align the team and assign responsibility and accountability. Alignment shows every team member what they need to do every day. The

team wins when every teammate is engaged to execute the plan.

### Benchmarking

Workshop attendees were also given a tour of the local Workforce Development Center and were able to benchmark a world-class training facility. This center is dedicated to creating programs that successfully develop and enhance the Virginia workforce through tailored training for the individual and organizations. One attendee stated that he was amazed at the technical capabilities and training offered “this close to home.”

### Next steps

Attendees were tasked to ask themselves, “If not me, then who?” and, “If not now, then when?” It takes courage to be a leader. Barto reminded them of the golden rule of leadership, to treat team members how they, not you, would like to be treated. The organization will always take on the personality of its leaders, and he asked them if they are creating an atmosphere to win.

As they exited the training, attendees were challenged to pose four questions to their team members when they returned to their offices.

- What do you expect from your leader?
- What can your leader expect from you?
- What do you expect from your team?
- What can your team expect from you?

Finally, each attendee pledged, “I am a leader. My team plays to win.”

“After all, you cannot be a great leader on a bad team. The true measure of a leader is the performance of their team,” Barto said in closing. ●

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