
Introduction

Today's IT organization faces a clear imperative: reduce costs while improving service levels. At the same time, it must assume an active leadership role to drive change—continuous improvement, innovation, and agility—throughout the enterprise, enabling efficient yet flexible business processes that create value and establish preference in the eyes of each customer.

How can these potentially competing objectives be satisfied with limited resources? For the answer, we turn to the lessons learned from Lean, which emerged in manufacturing during the 1950s and has since been embraced across every industry. It is now the time for IT to adopt Lean thinking as well.

This is the first definitive and comprehensive text on the *Lean IT body of knowledge*, demonstrating how the various aspects of Lean can be applied to the continuous improvement of information and information systems in order to enable and sustain the Lean enterprise. Written by Lean IT pioneers Steve Bell and Mike Orzen, this book distills over 40 years of experience in applying Lean principles, systems, and tools to information technology across many industries.

This book was written to help you—whether you are a business executive, manager, IT professional, or member of an improvement team—to proactively improve, integrate, align, and synchronize information and information systems to enable breakthrough performance and agility.

WHAT IS LEAN IT?

Is business process improvement part of Lean IT? What about best practices and benchmarking? Is agile software development a Lean IT practice? What about IT operational excellence and the ITIL service management framework? How about performance management dashboards and scorecards? Is applying Lean techniques to project management considered a Lean IT practice? And is cloud computing relevant in a Lean IT world?

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The answer to all these questions is *yes*. But Lean IT is much more than just a set of tools and practices; it is a deep behavioral and cultural transformation that encourages everyone in the organization to think differently about the role of quality information in the creation and delivery of value to the customer. Lean IT enables the IT organization to reach beyond alignment toward fundamental integration, cultivating an inseparable, collaborative partnership with the business.

Whether you are new to Lean, or a seasoned veteran, in this book you will find new insights into the power of Lean and the critical impact of an integrated IT function. In this book, Bell and Orzen explore all aspects of Lean IT within two primary dimensions:

1. *Outward-facing Lean IT*: Engaging information, information systems, and the IT organization in partnership with the business to continuously improve and innovate business processes and management systems
2. *Inward-facing Lean IT*: Helping the IT organization achieve operational excellence, applying the principles and tools of continuous improvement to IT operations, services, software development, and projects

These two dimensions are not separate but complementary, two sides of the same coin. They serve the ultimate objective of Lean transformation: creating value for the enterprise and its customers.

We begin in Part 1 by exploring the foundations of Lean, and how they apply to information, information systems, and the IT organization. Part 2 then explores the various outward-facing aspects of Lean IT applied to business process improvement, supported by an effective Lean management system that links strategy with daily work. Part 3 explores inward-facing issues: how Lean IT improves the performance of IT operations and services, software development, and project management, while considering the implications of a shift toward cloud computing. Part 4 brings it all together, with a comprehensive perspective on lean management and governance, offering a Lean IT roadmap to help readers on their own transformation journey.

The book concludes with case studies from several Lean leaders: Barry-Wehmiller, Con-way, Group Health, Ingersoll Rand, Steelcase, Toyota, and Virginia Mason Hospital. Each offers, in their own words, a

practical example of how Lean IT can enable and sustain the Lean enterprise transformation.

An ancient proverb says that the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The next best time is *right now*. So let's get started.