

Gemba Walks

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Who Am I?

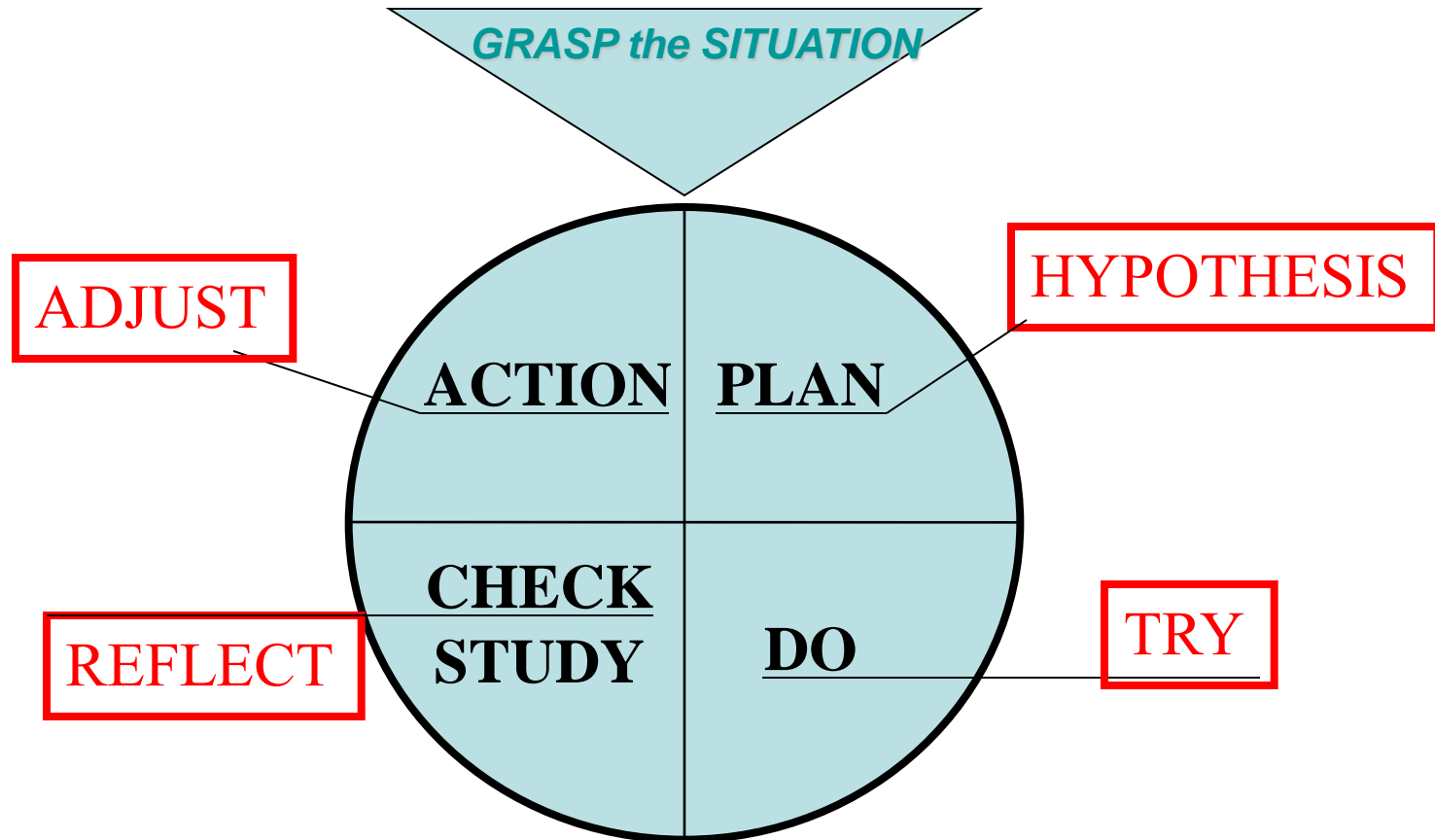
- Founder and CEO of LEI, 1997-2010.
- Senior Advisor to new CEO John Shook.
- Author, mostly recently of *Gemba Walks*.
- Gemba walker to grasp the situation and learn! (“Go see, ask why, show respect.”)
- Happy to be here, after gemba walks at two of the IW Best Plant winners.

Who Are You?

- Line managers in manufacturing operations.
- Leaders and members of process improvement teams (staffs).
- Leaders and members of various vertical functions: IT, HR, product engineering, finance, purchasing, etc.
- And...consultants.

Gemba Walks

A management practice to grasp the situation before taking action



Gemba Walks

Where?

What?

Why?

How?

Who?

When?

Where?

- On the gemba: The place where value is created; where value-creating work is done:
- Primary:
 - ✓ Engineering
 - ✓ Operations
 - ✓ Customer support
- Support (incidental work):
 - ✓ Line management

What?

- A horizontal journey along a value stream (a value creating process) across departments, functions, and organizations to facilitate:
 - ✓ A transformational leap in performance.
 - ✓ Sustainable improvement through PDCA.
 - ✓ Coaching the next generation of line managers and improvement staffs.

Why?

- Organizations are vertical & complex, but...
- Value flows horizontally across organizations to customers.
- Managers look up toward the top (the CEO) for direction, but...
- All value is created at the bottom where the actual work is done.
- A gemba walk helps managers see and reconcile the horizontal with the vertical.

How?

- The unit of observation is a value creating process – a product family value stream.
- A process is simply a sequence of actions that must be taken correctly in the correct order at the correct time to create value for some customer.
- All horizontal processes flow through vertical processes in a value creating system: Action, process, system.

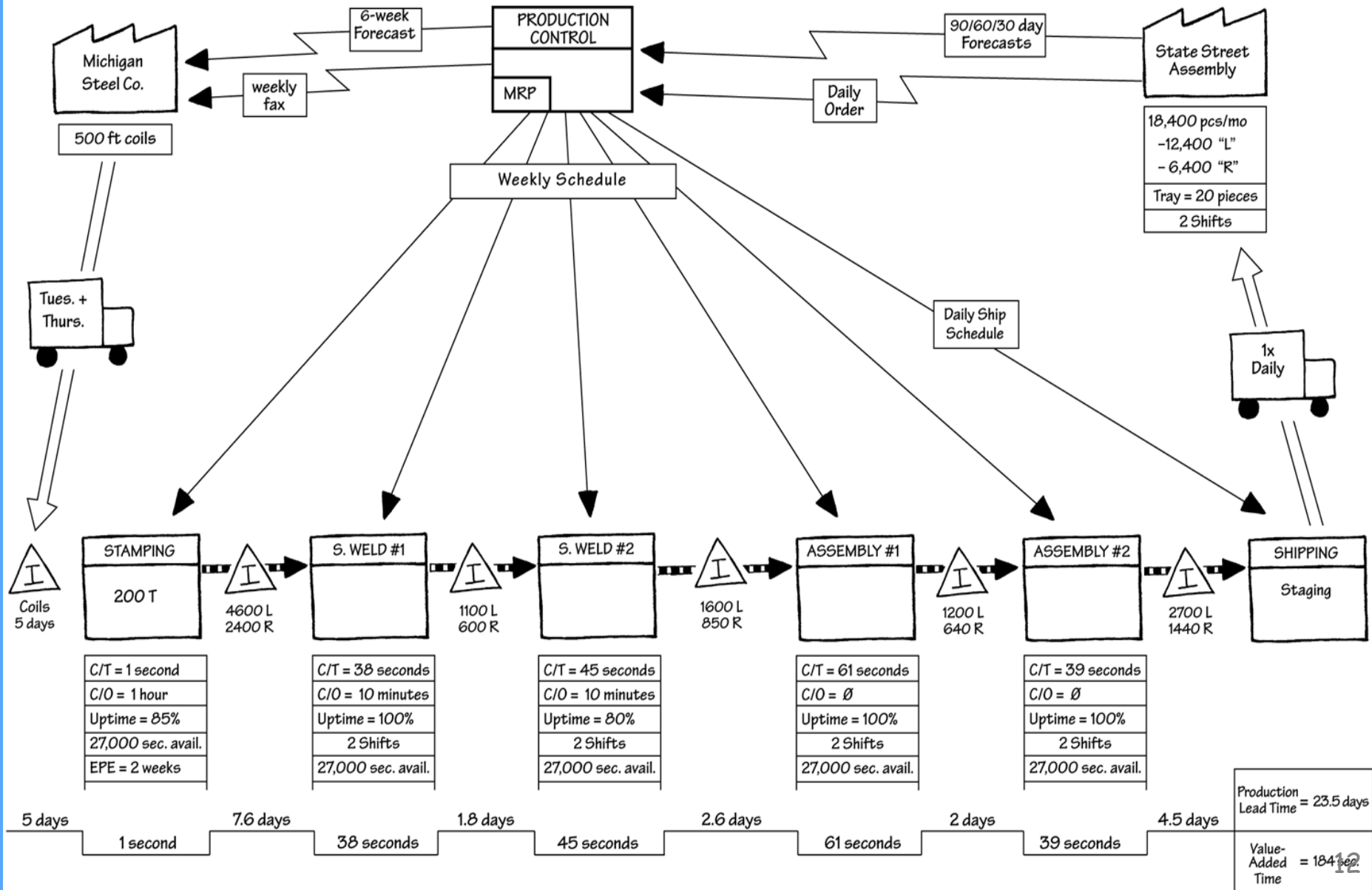
How?

- Select a value stream. (Any primary or support stream will do.)
- Gather everyone touching the value stream and talk a walk together.
- Ask about:
 - ✓ Purpose (solve the customer's problem)
 - ✓ Process (how it actually works)
 - ✓ People (how they are engaged in creating, sustaining & improving the process)

How?

- Draw a current state map....or not, depending on the circumstances.

Current-State Value Stream Stream



How?

- The objective of a gemba walk is not to draw a map, or to solve a specific problem, or to Plan or Do or Check or Act.
- It is to grasp the situation by involving everyone touching the process to understand purpose, process, and people.
- Once the situation is understood improvement is possible and more likely to succeed.

Who? (The Hard Part)

- Ideally, the CEO and COO with the function heads, customers, suppliers, and value stream leader!
- More realistically, the value stream leader and those directly touching the stream.

Who? (The Hard Part)

But today...

- The CEO and COO usually lack both knowledge and courage.
- There is no person responsible for the performance of most value streams – a value stream leader.

Who?

- How about you?
 - ✓ The operations manager for a facility.
 - ✓ The product line manager.
 - ✓ The head of the improvement team.
 - ✓ The purchasing manager looking up stream.
 - ✓ The sales manager looking down stream.

When?

- Before commencing a lean transformation in a value stream.
- Multiple times a year for each value stream to refresh gemba knowledge and keep the management team focused on cross-functional problems.
- Weekly or daily to grasp the changing situation in real time.

An Example of the Latter

- A daily management gemba walk for the senior executive and the function heads:
 - ✓ The 8 am walk through the fulfillment value stream to assess the situation.
 - ✓ The 10 am walk across all verticals to address value stream issues in real time.

Note: An obeya meeting in a product development process is another form of a cross-departmental gemba walk.

Gemba Walks

- The best way to truly grasp your situation as an organization – as a community of value creation – so that good, lean things can happen.
- A practice you can learn by practice and continually learn from practicing.

JIM WOMACK
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FOREWORD BY JOHN SHOOK

