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Business Excellence with Customer Service in World Class

– A Swedish Case Study of Lean in Supermarket

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Abstract

Background

Lean is nowadays a well-known concept which has been applied in different types of organizations, who strive to improve in order to be more efficient and successful - reduce costs but still maintain and improve quality. The Lean mind-set is based on the use of the human and material resources, matching and getting the associated processes more efficient, by working with continuous improvements. Even if Lean origins from the manufacturing and production sector, research indicate that Lean is transferable into other sectors. Lean is used to develop more seamless processes, improve flow, reduce waste and develop an understanding of customer value.

In this case study, the first part of Lean implementation in the Swedish retail sector, in particular a supermarket is outlined and further progression of the research is suggested.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to describe and outline the experiences from the implementation of Lean in the Swedish retail sector.

Methodology

In order to fulfil the goal in this paper the data collecting was made by interviews and participating observations during the period February to June 2016. The particular parts followed were the lean implementation process in the education part, different workshops and improvements startups in the chosen store. Analyzing the data was made by pattern-matching when the results were interpreted through the principles of Liker (2009).

Findings

Though, the research is still ongoing some findings have been done. The result so far shows; Standardized routines and clearer information, eliminated waste and better structure, tidiness and orderliness when everything is in the right place. The co-workers in the supermarket find it more smooth and easy to work and they can see a clear target with better engagement in the store. Barriers and success factors while implementing Lean, picked out from earlier research, can be recognized in this study as well. Still the most important cause in Lean implementation is to avoid organizations built and structures their Lean work on hard core, such as quality methodologies and tools, rather than focus on soft core, i.e., the human perspective with values and human resources.

Paper type

Case study

Keywords

Customer Service, Lean, Retail sector, Supermarket

Introduction

Organizations in general strive to develop in order to be more efficient and successful, reduce costs but still maintain and improve quality. All kinds of organizations in manufacturing and production of goods and services are facing similar market pressure and struggle to work efficiently. To deal with those demands and needs, organizations adopt different quality concepts and methodologies. Lean is nowadays a well-known concept which has been applied to deal with those demands. The Lean mind-set is based on the use of the human and material resources, matching and getting the associated processes more efficient, by working with continuous improvements (Rosén, 2014). Even if Lean originates from the manufacturing and production sector (Liker, 2009), research indicates that Lean is transferable into other sectors. Lean is used to develop more seamless processes, improve flow, reduce waste and develop an understanding of customer value (Rosén, 2014). However, retail seems to be a branch where Lean is not very common. Hence, there is a lack of research in this particular area (Noda, 2015).

Several studies, regardless branch, show a similar result regarding barriers and success factors that prevent or activate Lean implementation (see Table 1). An overview of articles in the area shows that most of the Lean implementation seems to be quite successful (Poksinska, Swartling & Drotz, 2013). However, there are also negative experiences (Dahlgaard, Pettersen, & Dahlgaard-Park, 2011; Larteb, Haddout & Banhadou, 2015). One cause to the negative experience is when organizations build and structure their Lean work on hard core, such as quality methodologies and tools, rather than focus on soft core, i.e., the human perspective with values and human resources (Ljungblom, 2012).

The purpose with this present paper is to describe the work and experiences with Lean implementation in a Swedish supermarket in the retail sector.

Lean

Originally, the Lean Management system was developed by the Toyota Motor Corporation (Toyota) as a production philosophy and quality system. (Larteb et al., 2015; Liker, 2009; Noda, 2015; Poksinska et al., 2013). Noda (2015) describes Lean as a philosophy of guiding principles and overarching goals and a set of management practices, tools and techniques. Studies show it is important to see and use Lean as a combination both and it can be a barrier to regard Lean as just a set of tools and techniques (Bortolotti, Boscaro & Danese, 2014; Dahlgaard et al., 2011; Larteb et al., 2015) and it is critical for the implementation of Lean to develop a culture that creates the involvement of everyone in the organization (Bamford, Forrester, Dehe, & Leese, 2013; Dahlgaard et al., 2011). Lean can be said to be a philosophy rooted in two key principles – *continuous improvement* and *respect for people* and both of them strive to eliminate waste and add value to customers/stakeholders with help of tools and techniques (Bamford et al., 2013; Dahlgaard et al., 2011; Liker, 2009; Noda, 2015; Womack & Jones, 2007). To reduce waste and add value, there are a number of principles (depending on the author) of Lean. Five principles are proposed by Womack and Jones (2003); value, the value stream, flow, pull and perfection. Liker (2009, p. 61-66) increased those to 14 principles;

1. Base your management decisions on a long-term philosophy, even at the expense of short term financial goals.
2. Create continuous process flow to bring problems to the surface.

3. Use pull systems to avoid overproduction.
4. Level out the workload.
5. Build a culture of stopping to fix problems, to get quality right the first time.
6. Standardized tasks are foundation for continuous improvement and employee empowerment.
7. Use visual control so no problems are hidden.
8. Use only reliable, thoroughly tested technology that serves your people and processes.
9. Grow leaders who thoroughly understand the work, live the philosophy, and teach it to others.
10. Develop exceptional people and teams who follow your company's philosophy.
11. Respect your extended network of partners and suppliers by challenging them and helping them improve.
12. Go and see for yourself to thoroughly understand the situation.
13. Make decisions slowly by consensus, thoroughly considering all options; implement decisions rapidly.
14. Become a learning organization through relentless reflection and continuous improvement.

Lean is a useful concept for the improvement of organizations, but studies show that Lean is context-dependent and, there is no single correct way to implement Lean. To reach success in Lean implementation institutions needs to select, adapt, apply and evaluate their selected approaches to the local context (Bamford, et al., 2013; Dahlgaard et al., 2011; Larteb et al., 2015; Radnor & Walley, 2008; Waring & Bishop, 2010).

Several studies, regardless branch, show a similar result regarding to barriers and success factors that prevent or activate Lean implementation (see Table; 1).

Table 1: Barriers and success factors in Lean implementation

Barriers	Success factors	
Thinking that Lean is a quick-fix	It takes three years or more for basic stability to be achieved*	*Ballé & Régnier, 2007 Dahlgaard et al., 2011 Larteb et al., 2015 Rosén, 2014
A lack of clear costumer focus		Hines et al., 2004 Radnor & Walley, 2008
To many procedures and targets	Awareness of strategic direction	Hines et al., 2004; Ballé & Régnier, 2007 Radnor & Walley, 2008 Waring & Bishop, 2010
People working in silos, sub optimization	Everyone needs to understand the effect of system thinking and process flow	Ballé & Régnier, 2007; Bamford et al., 2013 Hayward, 2012; Larteb, et al., 2015 Radnor & Walley, 2008 Waring & Bishop, 2010 Rosén, 2014
To regard lean more than a set of tools and techniques	It is about developing the culture that creates involvement of everyone	Ballé & Régnier, 2007; Bamford et al., 2013 Dahlgaard et al., 2011 Hines et al., 2004;

		Larteb et al., 2015 Ljungblom, 2014 Radnor et al., 2012 Rosén, 2014 Waring & Bishop, 2010 Womack & Jones, 2003
Top-down management change approaches	Bottom-up improvement methodology	Emiliani, 1998 Hayward, 2012 Poksinska et al., 2013
Adoption of a Lean concept	Organizations needs to select, adapt, apply and evaluate their selected approaches to the local context	Bamford et al., 2013 Dahlgaard et al., 2011; Larteb et al., 2015 Radnor & Walley, 2008 Poksinska et al., 2013
Leadership problems*	Changed leadership – from managing operations to managing people	Poksinska et al., 2013 *Rosén, 2014
Not a clear vision		Hines et al., 2004 Waring & Bishop, 2010 Rosén, 2014
	Everyone is on the Lean train	Ballé & Régnier, 2007 Dahlgaard et al., 2011 Emiliani, 1998 Larteb et al., 2015 Radnor & Walley, 2008

* means that the author just states the marked sentence

Lean in retail

Lean has been applied in different types of organizations, but there seems that retail is a branch there Lean is not very common and/or successful studying research on the field. Noda (2015) states “there were not many successful application cases in retail industry” and “Lean in the retail is not very clarified and a process for lean transformation is not clearly identified yet” (p.50). But there is some research considering Lean and retail, and with positive result. Noda’s case study at a Japanese retail organization shows a successful business transformation using Lean. The Lean implementation at the retail industry seven-eleven in Japan is another example for a success (Naruo & Toma, 2007). The Japanese case studies tells us that Lean is useful in retail industry and the organizations for eliminating waste, create better operation flow, minimize variation, limits on inventory and be more productive to a lower cost (Naruo & Toma, 2007; Noda, 2015).

In 2014 a case study in a similar supermarket like the studied one, where presented by Rosén (2014). The aim was to follow the implementation, not focus on cost and result like the studies from Japan. Rosén’s study showed differences between the perception of the current situation by the store manager and by the employees, and also a major lack of commitment among the employees. The conclusion of the study is that more focus should be devoted to the human resource, to create a better flow of information and distribute feedback and reconnect daily work and improvements. The supermarket in the case-study made by Rosén (2014) and in this present case-study are both a part of a Swedish cooperate group in retail. A part of the head office of the group started to adapt lean into retail after successful experiences of using

Lean in logistics (Delborn, Geijer & Nordström, 2015). The developing team of Lean in retail was also influenced of a Lean in retail project in The Baltics. In 2013 the first pilot project to implement Lean in a couple of Swedish stores started. After evaluating the implementations the Swedish cooperate group in retail made their own implementation formula (here called Lean Retail), and Lean Retail have now been implemented in a lot of stores in Sweden. The goal with Lean Retail is to “build conditions for an effective and result bringing culture of improvements” (p. 5). While Lean Retail is implemented the store should be created structures and operation methods as result to;

- increase value for the customer in developing the store after the customer needs
- use all co-workers competence, creativity and capacity to increase the performance of the store
- get more effective operation methods with a process focus so time and capital can be used in the best way
- get systematic improvement and development of the store to increase customer satisfaction, the sale and the result
- identify and clarify problems and shortages so these can be solved and ever rise again
- do the right things from the beginning

It is experiences from this adapted version - Lean Retail - that are studied in this paper's case-study.

Methodology

In order to fulfil the goal in this paper the data collecting was made by interviews and participating observations during the period February to June 2016. The particular parts followed were the lean implementation process in the education part, different workshops and improvements startups in the chosen store. Analyzing the data was made by pattern-matching when the results were interpreted through the principles of Liker (2009).

The case study

The studied supermarket (from now on called S) opened in 2007 and offers all kind of foods, consumables, clothes, flowers, kitchenware, and general merchandise goods. S also provides catering, having their own bakery, and delicacy products. The store has a size of 6300 m², and 120 employees whereof 69% are women and 31% men. In 2008 started a project called “Quality in store” which resulted in an award. S also got an award 2015 for being the best store in Sweden. S's idea is – *Sweden's cheapest supermarket. Low price, every day of the year!* S has spent a lot of time together with the employees to build values (happiness, responsibility and respect) and guidelines to act as a co-worker. The most important value is how to act in the store with the customers and S visualizes the values with a fictive figure – The Maxian. The Maxian want to win (high ambitions, do their best to make the best store even better), welcoming arms (meet customer and co-workers welcoming arms and shows thoughtfulness, helpfulness and is careful) quick feet (works quick, smart and efficient), an eye for the customer (can see the needs and can sell), a warm heart (care for other people and like their job), and comfortable hands (skillfulness, tidiness). The organizational structure in S can be seen in Figure 1. The leading team includes CEO, the personnel manager, the controller, the operations manager, the team leader, the cashier manager and the marketing manager.

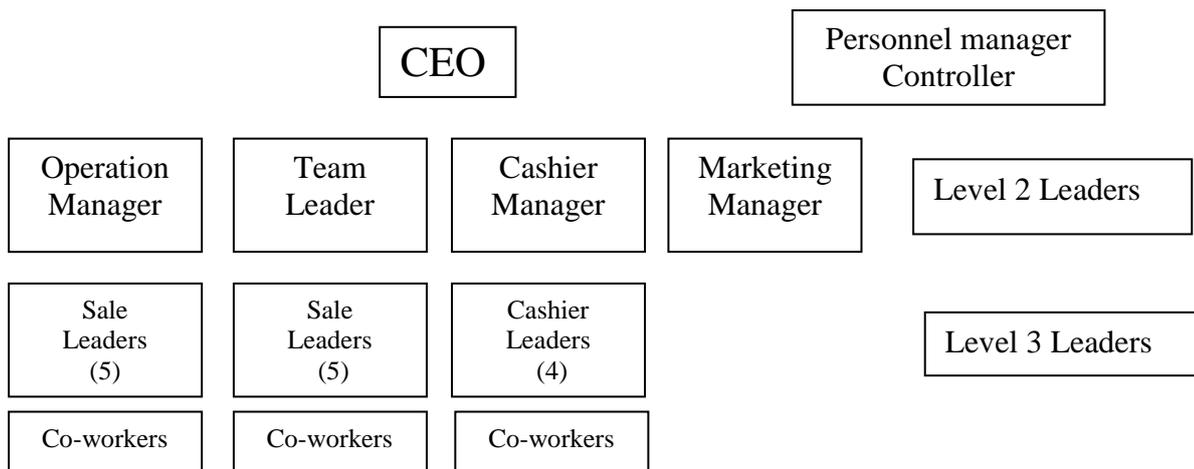


Figure 1: The figure shows the organizational structure of S in Mars 2016

The Lean transformation

The Lean journey started in 2015 while the Lean consultants and S managers met, to set the starting point and a broad schedule for the implementation in spring 2016. In 19 days, a mix with education and implementation work where planned during January to June 2016. The consultants showed the leading team planning structures, hours that will be needed for the implementation team within the planned days, but also necessary Lean implementation time between the education days. The consultants described and showed experiences from other projects and told S that this will be hard for the store and you need to be focused on this project during the first year of implementation.

Everything started with a kick off in the end of January – tree days of education of Lean Retail and training. Participants in the implementation group (IG) where 22 of S employees, including the project manager (also operation manager of the store), the cashier manager, the marketing manager, sale managers, and pinpointed employees. All of them picked out of the project manager. The CEO was present at the kickoff as well. Most of the IG have not seen or heard anything about Lean before, so there was hours of struggling with principles, methods and tools. There were also workshops while the IG worked with visions for S, and routines, processes, services that could be improved. The result of the first workshop the IG wanted to improve most of the routines in the store, and also improve the communication and the structure. The IG also has high expectations in the presence of the implementation - “generate more time, clearness, smooth and easy, new thinking, easier workday, neat and clean, fun, common goals, better communication, and tidiness”. In January the IG also started to use the tool 5S (Sort, Set in order, Shine, Standardize, Sustain) in the stores stockpile and in the offices. There were happy faces, a lot of energy and willingness to start the project. Almost everyone in the IG said that Lean Retail was the best thing that could happen to the store and it was so necessary because the store/the organization lacked in structure, leadership and communication.

In the beginning of February the IG informed and educated the rest of the staff in principles, methods and tools parallel to the ongoing work with 5S and there were also more education about Lean Retail, especially methods and tools. *The daily work whiteboards* (five different; one for the whole store and four for departments; perishables, colonial, bakery and delicacy,

cashier) were put in place and later on (Mars) the staff started with *daily morning meetings*. After the 5s work was totally structured and tidy in a specific area, photos were taken for using together with daily checklists for each area. These checklists were constructed of the IG and will be used as a control of structure before the daily meeting. At the same time the store also started to measure four different key factors (empty spaces in the shelf, phone calls from cashiers, number of suggestions of improvement, goods/customer). In April and May the staff were dealing with standardization of the core processes and taking pictures of best practice. In June the first part of the project were closed and there was a day with presentation of result of the implementation – so far.

It seems like an easy peace to deal with...but..... After the first couple of education days the IG discussed and agreed about *to do lists*, important actions that should be done until next Lean Retail gathering. The task to the project manager was to do action plans so the actions could be prioritized in the group. But the project manager where planned on vacation during next three weeks, so *someone else* should do the planning instead of him. Next meeting the *to do list* were followed up, and in three weeks in a row no action plan were done. No one had been doing the planning for the IG Lean Retail implementation work. Apparently someone else did not exist. In other words there was no time for specific Lean Retail actions for the IG, they just worked with their ordinary tasks. After every new occasion the same important actions were printed on a new *to do list*. During these weeks the IG lost their energy. The happy faces were blown away. They wanted to let the implementation start, but they could not because of the no existence planning – there were no time left! Angry words were thrown on the project manager and to the leading team of the store. In a while the implementation of Lean Retail stopped in S. But the IG decided to do things themselves, and tried to plan their own time different and involve the rest of the co-workers in the project in a better way. The project manager also tried to tuck in more hours for the IG and for other co-workers covered up for them. The project manager also planned some more actions for the IG in the end of the project. The implementation started again and the work with 5S, measuring key factors and daily meetings struggled on, but the energy in the IG was harmed. In April there was the first workshop during management and structure in the store. The task was to study the current structure in S and find a responsible person for each task in all processes. The fact was that *somebody* was responsible for most of the tasks in the store, which explained the frustration the personnel in the store felt of not knowing who they could ask. The IG also found out that the current structure was not best for the function in the store. S really needed a store manager to handle the daily management in the store and also filter information and ideas from the CEO. The IG started a theoretical reorganization with focus on the needs in S which ended up with a new organization, and more specific roles and tasks for the different managers in the store. The project manager presented the new organization structure for CEO, and he was gently delighted about it. The new organization has not been established yet. In May a new project started in the store, to expand the cafeteria and the project manager of the implementation of Lean Retail was involved in this project as well.

Sum-up in June

In the last education part of the implementation the project manager and his team delivered a sum-up of improvements during the first months of Lean Retail implementation. As follows;

- Over all tidiness
- Better structure and orderliness in the stockpile
- Smooth and easy to work
- Better cohesiveness

- Clearer information
- Structure in checkout line
- Better engagement
- Everything on right place
- Clear target
- New expectations
- Standardized routines
- Eliminated waste
- The co-worker is more involved
- The co-worker gets feedback
- The departments are in a new better level
- Less stockpile
- Important information is available to all

The result shows that the expectations the IG had in January (generate more time, clearness, smooth and easy, new thinking, easier workday, neat and clean, fun, common goals, better communication, and tidiness) have been fulfilled.

As told earlier S started to measure four different key factors (empty spaces in the shelf, phone calls from cashiers, number of suggestions of improvement, goods/customer) and they can see improvements in two of them - number of suggestions of improvement and empty spaces in the shelf. In June there have been around 80 completed suggestions for improvements. Most of them proposed from the co-workers. The key-factor empty spaces in the shelf decreased from 420/day to 297/day which can be valued to 100 000 SEK. In the kick off everyone in the IG were asked to estimate how tidy, clean and structured the stockpile was and also in June they were asked to do the same task. They should use a scale from one to seven (1-7) and with a decimal. In January the estimated mean value was 3,4 and in June 4,6 which bring out an improvement of 35%. The store also measured the customer's satisfaction (NKI). In 2015 NKI showed a number of 82% (maximum 100%) and in 2016 the NKI increased to 84% satisfied customers.

The sum-up also brought up tasks that were not so functional during the implementation. The IG perceived that the lack in communication continuously making problem, even if improvements have been done. The IG was still affected over the missing plans over Lean Retail work in the store. They stated that they lost time and could have reached better result. The project manager said that now, after the starting months in the implementation, he understand what it is all about and now he felt that he could do well as project manager.

Goals towards the way forward

During the last sum-up day the IG also studied the result and discussed the new steps in the implementation and challenges to deal with.

The result shows that the expectations the IG had in January have been reached but still the IG declared that the biggest challenge is too really to get every co-worker in S on the Lean Retail train. Another challenge is *to keep up the good work*. Not lean back and think that is all finished. There are always improvements to deal with, always better solutions. The planning for the Lean Retail work should be structured before the next phase (autumn) in the implementation and the project manager is responsible.

Towards the autumn (phase 2 of the implementation) the IG and the S decided to focus on;

- **Finishing the 5S work.**
 - There are still processes that not have been studied and mapped.
 - The daily meeting leader have to be more strenuous during check the areas with the checklist to increase and keep up the tidiness.
 - Create a plan to roll out all the new standardizations
 - Take more control pictures that can be used

- **Deal with structure and leadership**
 - Start with the key factor phone calls from cashiers
 - Use the digital activity log
 - Clear out participation at different meetings
 - Involve more co-workers to lead the daily meeting
 - To in a better way follow up the suggestions to improvements, and to respect the given time limit
 - Insure that every co-worker read the information at the daily meeting board every day.
 - Reduce the key factor empty spaces in the shelf

- **Customer focus**
 - Clear information to co-workers about obligations to S
 - Remind each other how the co-workers in S treat the customers
 - Write all suggestions from the work-shop *my perfect store* in the digital activity log
 - Finish and place out the customer service pictures

- **Standardization**
 - More mapping of processes and make work tool plans from the outcome
 - Make a roll out plan
 - Improve the existing work tool plans

- **Roles, structure and responsibility**
 - In the end of august a meeting with CEO is planned. In the meeting the new structure of the store will be presented and hopefully established.
 - Inventory of competence - there after *the right person at the right place*
 - Clear out the different roles in S and visualize with pictures

Discussion

So, what can be said and discussed about the first month of the implementation of Lean Retail in S. I am discussing the result of the implementation through Likers (2009) 14 principles, and also see if the common barriers and success factors can be find in this implementation as well.

As said earlier Lean can be a useful concept for the improvement of organizations, and studies show that the organization needs to select, adapt, apply and evaluate their selected approaches to the local context for be successful (Bamford, et al., 2013; Larteb et al., 2015) which have been done in this implementation. S is using Lean Retail. S has also tried to develop the culture that creates involvement of everyone (Bamford et al., 2013; Larteb et al., 2015; Rosén, 2014) partly with the IG and partly with educating and involve the rest of co-workers gradually in the implementation. The IG led two different workshops with all of the co-

workers in S. The result from June also states that the co-worker is more involved and engaged in the store after the implementation than before. The result correspond well with Likers (2009) principle 10; *Develop exceptional people and teams who follow your company's philosophy*. Surely, the implementation did not go without problems. Everyone, particularly the co-workers, was not that enthusiastic in the beginning and there are people that not still is. But the IG is working methodical and constant with education, coaching and information. The IG states that involve everyone in S are the biggest challenge the IG have during the implementation. Rosén's (2014) study showed differences between the perception of the current situation by the store manager and by the employees, and also a major lack of commitment among the employees. The conclusion of her study is that more focus should be devoted to the human resource, to create a better flow of information and distribute feedback and reconnect daily work and improvements. Rosén's result must be taken in consideration during next phase in S. When the IG is aware about the challenge, perhaps there will be fewer problems - especially when the negative ones in S can see the advantages. The IG has also informed and in a way also educated some of the suppliers, so the deliveries will be at the right place at once. This can be seen as Likers (2009) principle 11; *Respect your extended network of partners and suppliers by challenging them and helping them improve*.

The IG has been worked a lot with the stockpile during the implementation both with structure and tidiness, but also to bring the stock down. For example is there are signs that tell the minimum and maximum level of the gods, and when it is time to order. The new structure (everything have its own, marked place), and less gods in the stockpile make more space and it is easier for the staff to find what they want, and to order when it is necessary. This corresponds as well with Likers (2009) principle 3; *Use pull systems to avoid overproduction*. The IG states in June that the result shows; over all tidiness, better structure and orderliness in the stockpile, everything on right place, and less stockpile. Hence, there will be a lot more to do in that area further on, according the IG and steps to be done in phase 2. The same 5 S work has been implemented in the checkout line, with the result of a totally new structure. In the front desk and in the cafeteria there is still a lot of work to do. The 5S work has partly started in the front desk and the cashier leaders are looking forward to deal with the new questions that arise. The head of the cafeteria was not that enthusiastic. The Lean Retail implementation was not prioritized in the cafeteria in the beginning and she was enthusiastic to start in Mars, April but the rebuilding and the accompanying new tasks prevent the implementation. The rebuilding also hindered the project manager to focus on the Lean Retail implementation. This is a typical example when a store manager could have been useful in S to discuss and prioritize the ideas that the CEO delivers. Helping the co-workers to focus on one project in time.

The daily morning meetings at the *daily work whiteboards* with the checklist and area control, seems to be important and successful for the store. This checklist uses of the manager of the meeting (for now level 2 or 3 leaders) before the daily meeting and if the controlled area does not match with the picture there will be a mark in the protocol, picked up at the meeting and a responsible for fixing the problem is chosen. If it is co-occurrence problem it will be transferred to the improvement list and a date when the problem should be adjust and who is responsible. This *daily work whiteboards* is also the place for news, important information and not least the place where the staff in the store pith their suggestions of improvements. The questions, suggestions of improvements that can be handled at the department whiteboards (level 3 leaders and staff) moves directly after the meeting to the whole stores whiteboard (level 2 and lever 3 leaders), and will be taken up as a question in that daily meeting. This process with control and daily meetings is about Likers (2009) principle 2; *Create continuous*

process flow to bring problems to the surface, principle 7; Use visual control so no problems are hidden, and principle 12; Go and see for yourself to thoroughly understand the situation. This daily meetings and the follow-up is a help for everyone in the store to understand the effect of system thinking and process flow (Bamford et al., 2013; Larteb, et al., 2015; Rosén, 2014) and could also be seen as a bottom-up improvement methodology (Emiliani, 1998; Hayward, 2012; Poksinska, 2010) which both are considered as success factors. In June the result indicates; better cohesiveness, clearer information, important information is available to all, clear target – which shows that the store really is in the right direction. Thus there is still work to do. Focus in phase 2 will be to involve more co-workers to lead the daily meeting and insure that every co-worker read the information at the daily meeting board every day. S also needs to follow up the suggestions to improvements in a better way and in time.

The IG has also mapped out all the different processes in each department and tried to find the core processes after discussions with each other and the co-workers decided best practices. Thereafter IG described the processes and explained the different steps with pictures. Every core process in the store, now have a standard that is available and clear for all. Every process also has their owner. If anybody finds another way to work with the core process they need to put a suggestion to improvement on the daily meeting board. Principle 6; *dealing with standardization of the core processes and taking pictures of best practice* and 8; *Use only reliable, thoroughly tested technology that serves your people and processes* (Liker, 2009) fits fine here. Also in this area there is more to improve. The IG wants to map more processes and standardize them. S also needs to improve the existing work tool plans and make plan to roll out all the standardized processes to the co-workers.

Most of the leaders in the store are participants in the IG. These few ones that are not participants are involved like Likers (2009) principle 9; *Grow leaders who thoroughly understand the work, live the philosophy, and teach it to others.* The importance of the leadership has been clear according to the stop in the implementation process in the beginning of the project. There were leadership problems in the project, exactly like in Rosén´s (2014) study. The project manager is aware of the fact that he should have been more planning and acting in the beginning of the project. After discussing with the project manager he told me that he had not understood the importance of planning actions for IG between the education days and it was nearly an impossible mission to plan them on a weekly base because the store lacked in personal resources. Perhaps this will be changed in phase 2. It is also clear that the CEO need to be more involved in the implementation process, and need to change the structure in the store. Hopefully we can notice a changed leadership in December – from managing operations to managing people (Poksinska et al., 2013).

It seems like S really is ongoing with the implementation and the S have started with new behaviors. I believe that Likers (2009) principle 1; *Base your management decisions on a long-term philosophy, even at the expense of short term financial goals.* 5; *Build a culture of stopping to fix problems, to get quality right the first time,* and 13; *Make decisions slowly by consensus, thoroughly considering all options; implement decisions rapidly* nowadays is a part of the stores agenda and have awareness of strategic direction which is seen as one of the success factors (Radnor & Walley, 2008). Hence, S must take in consideration that it takes three years or more for basic stability to be achieved (Larteb et al., 2015; Rosén 2014) and it is going to take a while to *Become a learning organization through relentless reflection and continuous improvement* (Liker, 2009, Principle 14).

The results are interpreted through Liker's 14 principles, and all of the principles except 4; *Level out the workload* has been dealing with in the discussion so far. Principle 4 is not new for the store, they have using that for ages, but there are still improvements that can be done. The key factor *empty spaces in the shelf*, has been reduced in S during the first phase of implementation. Hence, the IG had noticed that the number of empty spaces increase every Monday morning. The personnel in S are heavenly reduced in weekends, so that may be the problem. The IG wants to establish an activity while trying to have more co-workers in the store during Sundays and see if the problem reduces.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to describe and outline the experiences from the implementation of Lean in the Swedish retail sector. After being a part in the IG for nearly five months and during education, discussions and different kind of improvements I really can say that the IG and a few of the co-workers are on the Lean Retail train. My opinion strengthens of the fact that Liker's principles can be recognized in S behaviors.

From the results so far, a summary can be made of the parts that influence the supermarket today:

- Standardized routines and clearer information
- Eliminated waste
- Better structure, tidiness and orderliness - everything in the right place
- Smooth and easy to work
- Clear target with better engagement of the co-workers
- The departments are in a new better level

It is interesting that barriers and success factor from earlier research in both similar and different organizations easily can be recognized in this study as well. Still the most important cause in Lean implementation is avoid organizations built and structures their Lean work on hard core, such as quality methodologies and tools, rather than focus on soft core, i.e., the human perspective with values and human resources. Than we can start to reach Business Excellence with Customer Service in World Class.

Further studies

Since this study was about the initial steps of lean implementation it would be most interesting taking part of further work and result in this particular supermarket. The case study can e.g. include a time series analysis. For instance, after six and then after 12 months the experiences can be investigated and outlined.

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