



Greg Howell talks sometimes about massive writer's block - in his case it's dictation block because he uses Dragon-like speech recognition software. My problem is usually writer's overload-there is so much to say and so little room to say it all. This week I was influenced by re-reading the High Velocity Edge by Stephen Spear on the plane. It re-energized my understanding of a learning organization and (could be the basis for a number of newsletter riffs and way too much to say).

Particularly relevant to LCI, however, was the story of the way the Navy nuclear reactor program incorporated the Plan, Do, Check and Act cycle in developing nuclear power for submarines. For Admiral Rickover and Theodore Rockwell, PDCA was not the incorporation of "tools" in their analysis. Rather, it was the incorporation of the scientific method that PDCA represents. The planning cycle was not just for developing an approach to an issue, it also required the development of clear expectations-a hypothesis. If we do this, we expect that to happen. When "that" doesn't happen, we have the ability to find out why. As Spear recounts it, "[w]ith expectations clear, it would be obvious when something happened that didn't conform to those expectations. As a result, even if you didn't succeed, you created an opportunity to learn to succeed." Performance continues to improve over time when you are committed to learning to succeed from the work you do.

This week in Milwaukee we will have just such an opportunity to learn to succeed. At the Design Forum we'll be discussing "better practices" in using lean principles in design with presentations from some of the leading edge designers in our community. Just as importantly, however, we'll be developing a set of expectations for design in lean-how do we expect lean to inform design? What are the frontiers of lean design? What's the edge? And in that discussion, the results of which I'll report next week in this space, we will have created an opportunity not just to learn about lean in design, but to succeed in implementing lean principles in important areas of the design process.

My kids used to comment routinely on how lucky a person I am. Indeed, I have been lucky. But as I told them, the biggest part of "luck" is getting out of bed and standing in the street so you can be hit by the luck bus. Putting yourself in action creates the opportunity for luck and, with good design, an opportunity to learn to succeed. We hope you'll join us this week in Milwaukee for that opportunity.