



As May draws to a close, it prompted me to think about the verb “may.” Dictionary.com was most helpful:

1. (used to express possibility): It may rain.
2. (used to express opportunity or permission): You may enter.
3. (used to express contingency, especially in clauses indicating condition, concession, purpose, result, etc.): I may be wrong but I think you would be wise to go. Times may change but human nature stays the same.
4. (used to express wish or prayer): May you live to an old age.
5. Archaic . (used to express ability or power.)

These are all things we talk about in our community. Possibility, opportunity, contingency, wish lists—the definition could not have been more appropriate. We even talk about how command and control systems of project delivery (“power”) are archaic. Although we express all those things on our projects, most of our commitment based planning (whether it is Target Value Design, Phase Pull Planning or Weekly Work Planning) eschews “may”—it is not a word of commitment. It is a word of possibility.

May is also a month deeply imbedded with paradox. It can be 40° and raining one day and 90° and cloudless the next (almost anywhere in the country). May starts with May Day—a day on which spring is celebrated, the worker’s revolution is celebrated and the Law is celebrated in the states—and ends with Memorial Day, a day on which we remember veterans for their service to our country. Our projects are endless engines of enigma—puzzles to be solved, conundra to be harmonized. It is the perfect abraxas—in order to find certainty, we must start with ambiguity.

With some many possibilities and yet a project to deliver, where do we turn? We have many examples of decision making tools down through history. The easiest one you may have heard from either your mother or a General Superintendent justifies a decision thusly: “because I said so.” We have tried others—think about how Congress makes decisions or how the Fed makes decisions on interest rates or how your children pick birthday presents or places to eat. Or perhaps how the Forest Service decides on a ten-year forest plan among a host of competing alternatives? **Jim Suhr**, a veteran of the Forest Service spent many years ruing the way decisions were made. At some point it struck him as illogical to weigh advantages against disadvantages—that tended to give more importance to disadvantages which was at least, counter-intuitive. The results of his ruminations over the years was a decision making process called “**Choosing By Advantages.**” **Hal Macomber** of Lean Project Consulting spent two hours with the incipient New York Lean Community of Practice talking about the process. He simply called it “sound decision making” and took the position that there is really no other way to make “sound” decisions.

You’ll have a chance next week to decide for yourself. **John Koga** of **Boldt** is roundly regarded as the Second Grand Poobah of CBA (behind Jim Suhr). He’ll be delivering a two day workshop in the Bay Area June 6 and 7 ([see flyer HERE and below](#)) on **Choosing By Advantages**. Seating is limited so please sign up post haste. As the most interesting man in the world might say, “choose wisely my friends.”



Lean Construction Institute

Building Knowledge in Design and Construction

Another wise choice is the **Joint LCI/CURT meeting** on **June 13** in **St. Louis**, followed by our own and the AIA's **9th Annual Design Forum** on the **14th** and **15th**. We have 50 confirmed attendees at the Design Forum at this writing and are hoping to surpass 100 to continue our conversations as to how lean principles can inform, improve and enhance design. See the signups below for specific information.

Have a great and safe week. And, as I was reminded last night, use plenty of sun screen. The sun is not getting any cooler.