



Lean Construction Institute

Building Knowledge in Design and Construction

At the holidays, we exchange cards and greetings and party with one another. It seems appropriate, therefore, to reach into the mailbag and let all y'all in on the bounty I receive on a regular basis. First up was an email I received Friday from Tim Becker at Iowa State. Tim reports:

"54 civil engineering juniors and seniors learned about lean construction theory during CE 306 this semester through two active learning simulations promoted by the Lean Construction Institute--Parade of Trades and Silent Squares.

"The students learn how reducing variation in work flow improves productivity and that teamwork and communication aids optimization of project results."

Professor Becker originally contacted me in September of this year, inquiring about a "group of construction, civil and industrial engineering students thinking of forming an LCI student chapter at Iowa State." I forwarded that email to Tariq Abdelhamid, the chair of our Academic Forum. Tariq's response was that it is easier to have students work with an existing Community of Practice. We promised to talk with Tim at the Congress.

When you start thinking of the challenges of getting a Community of Practice together, or start a lean initiative in your company or just start doing the Last Planner™, it's easy to come up with the reasons why it "won't be easy." But guys like Tim Becker, P.E. and MBA, remind us that just starting is the first important step.

One wouldn't think that Iowa would be a hot bed of the lean movement. Think again. Corporate member Russell Construction in the Quad Cities has used lean principles at Augustana College in Rock Island. Walbridge and Pepper and Boldt and other larger firms are working in Iowa. Stacey Root of Boulder Associates and Randy Cram of Bergland + Cram reported on rapid proto typing on a health care project in Iowa using mock-ups with interlocking cardboard panels invented by a fellow in Mason City (no, he didn't play the trombone) where Randy and his firm are located.

I say these things because we need the community's help in developing further Communities of Practice. Why not Iowa? Wisconsin has a roving community that moves between Milwaukee, Madison and (I'm told) the Dells. The Great Lakes Community moves between East Lansing and the Detroit area. I'm hoping someone will step up in the area and help us get an Iowa group started. Are you listening Jay Wagner?





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In addition to Iowa, I've floated the following cities as potential sites for LCI Communities of Practice (blue presents forming CoPs and red represents potential):

- San Antonio, TX: This Community is forming January
- Austin, TX: Great interest and the core group is forming
- New Orleans, LA
- Minneapolis, MN
- St. Louis, MO
- Indianapolis, IN
- Miami, FL
- Salt Lake City, UT
- Burlington, VT
- Hartford, CT

We had a South Florida chapter before the recession decimated construction in the Miami area. It may be an opportune time to re-energize that Community. The St. Louis Construction Consumers Council hosted Tim Gunn of Alberici and me last Spring for a presentation and we had preliminary discussions with the local AGC and the SLCCC regarding creating a Community of Practice. St. Louis is home to corporate members McCarthy Building Companies and HOK,, among others and we had strong support for the Design Forum held there last June.

If you live or work in any of our targets of interest, let me know. We believe the Communities of Practice are at the very heart of what we're trying to do in transforming the industry. It would be a shame to transform only 35% of the industry in 35% of the country.

Have a deep conversation with a colleague this week and, as always, be safe my friends.