



Lean Construction Institute

Building Knowledge in Design and Construction

Prelude 1:

Looking back, I can see how the dots connect in my life beginning with a mother who was a production manager. In the late 1970s, another dot marked the turning point in my thinking; I was invited to speak on construction productivity to the Western Council of Construction Consumers (WCCC) in San Francisco.

The invitation from the WCCC was a big deal, my first public presentation. The invitation had the effect described by Samuel Johnson. "The realization that one is to be hanged in the morning concentrates the mind wonderfully." So I went to work and prepared the great speech on construction productivity. With a brilliant draft in hand, I invited Professors Oglesby and Parker from Stanford out to the office. They listened through and said it was dreadful, or maybe just really bad, and gave some suggestions. With brilliant draft two in hand and only 3 days left, I asked them back. They agreed while it was better it had not risen to the level of mediocre. This concentrated my mind somewhere south of frustrated and west of disturbed. Then they asked me what I had learned analyzing construction operations.

I thought a bit and said a three-step pattern was clear. Improvement always followed a shift from understanding the problem in terms of individual training and motivation to system design. And then the group of people who operated and maintained the system gathered and became a team. Finally, the team used a collaborative process to study, understand and improve system performance. These steps produced three outcomes; the system ran better, the second improvement effort was easier and the team realizes that they should have started sooner. They said this was a good speech and maybe it was.

I can't recall if the speech was well received but it was marked a shift in the way I was thinking about improvement. Soon after, I came across "Whole Earth Models and Systems" by Donella Meadows. A few pages in, she explains how systems fail in "A Child's Guide to a Systems Viewpoint." I assigned students to identify a construction example of each of the 5 failure modes she describes. Try it: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/33615059/Donella-Meadows-Whole-Earth-Models-Systems>

(Steve Jobs spoke of connecting the dots in his 2005 Commencement address at Stanford. Listen to it now if you haven't already and again if you have. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1R-jKKp3NA>)

Now the news...



Requests to LCI Members

The Construction User Round Table (CURT) and LCI are planning a second joint summit in September. The organizers are looking for project teams - Owner, Designer, Constructor - that are willing to speak about their experiences applying Lean Construction to deliver projects, what worked and what could be improved. Please let me know if you want to participate or have a good idea.

And...

Ted Garrison, Host of New Construction Strategies Radio, Growing@TedGarrison.com is looking for people to interview people on their experience applying Lean Construction. You can find his previous interviews at www.NCS30.com. There you can find the likes of Mike Sullivan and Daniel Pink. Ted has also suggested we start an LCI Radio Station on the Web. He is looking for volunteers....

And...

I am looking for a person skilled in the use of Powerpoint to sharpen the presentation used to introduce the Parade of Trades. Be the first on your block to let me know.

An offer to LCI members

Oscia Wilson (oscia.wilson@gmail.com) has developed a tool for architects and engineers allowing them to sketch in real-time over the web, to make collaboration easier. Give it a try and send her feedback: <http://www.openingdesign.com/>

Two New Books

"Build Lean - Transforming Construction Using Lean Thinking" by Adrian Terry and Stuart Smith,

<http://www.ciria.org/service/Home/AM/ContentManagerNet/ContentDisplay.aspx?Section=Home&ContentID=19363> published by CIRIA, www.ciria.org

The book is a novel about how a company comes to adopt lean practices. It is well written and supported by solid footnotes that reference many sources from the Lean Construction community. The book isn't about tools, rather it is a guide to changing culture. It is designed to help senior managers see the world from a different perspective, one that opens new possibilities. The book is built on the framework reported by Womack and Jones in their book, "The Machine That Changed the World): Value, Value Stream, Flow, Pull, Perfection. There is more to say about this book and I recommend it.

"Making Sense of Construction Improvement", by Stuart D. Green, June 2011, Wiley-Blackwell, http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-1405130466_descCd-description.html



Stuart is always challenging, provocative and interesting as he takes a critical perspective. I haven't seen the book so have little to say beyond I both doubt I will agree with him all through and believe I will gain new insight. Let me know if you read it and will review it.

The Passing Of Dr. Eliyahu Goldratt

I read today that Dr. Eliyahu Goldratt has died. His book "The Goal" provided the theoretical foundation for the Parade of Trades® and later work "Theory of Constraints" helped us understand how to apply to projects principles and concepts drawn from production management. The following memorial is from his website:

"Sixty-four years ago a giant was born. Dr. Eliyahu M. Goldratt spent his entire adult life fighting to show that it is possible to make this world a better place. We must have the honesty to see reality as it is, we must have the courage to challenge assumptions, and above all, we must use the gift of thinking. Having applied these principles to various management fields, he created the Theory of Constraints. His concepts and teachings have expanded beyond management and are being used in healthcare, education, counseling, government, agriculture and personal growth - to name a few fields using TOC. His legacy is invaluable. On June 11th, 2011 at noon, Eli Goldratt passed away at his home in Israel in company of his family and close friends. The strength and passion of Eli allowed him to spend his last days sharing and delivering his latest insights and breakthroughs to a group of people who have committed to transfer this knowledge to the TOC Community during the upcoming Theory of Constraints International Certification Organization Conference in New York. It was Eli's last wish to take TOC to the next level - truly standing on the shoulders of the Giant he is. "I smile and start to count on my fingers: One, people are good. Two, every conflict can be removed. Three, every situation, no matter how complex it initially looks, is exceedingly simple. Four, every situation can be substantially improved; even the sky is not the limit. Five, every person can reach a full life. Six, there is always a win-win solution. Shall I continue to count?" Dr. Eliyahu M. Goldratt 1947- 2011"

Here is a clip of Dr. Goldratt speaking on TOC: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtjTVwd8x-4>

And two short clips showing the impact of dependence and variation on traffic.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=od-XkcmE0_w
& <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Suugn-p5C1M>

A folly:

Grand Rapids' response to an article in Newsweek.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPjjZCO67Wl>