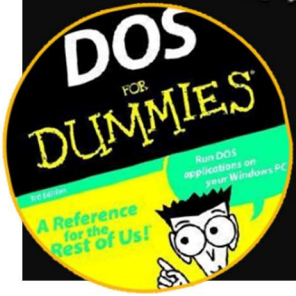


“Lean,” “True North,” “Kaizen,” and “Hoshin Kanri” for Neophytes

*“air traffic control”
for “Incident Commanders”*



Graphics by: Patrick Monette-Shaw

“Lean” isn’t an acronym. *Lean* is a set of operating philosophies to help optimize value for patients by reducing “waste” and wait times. It emphasizes patient’s needs, employee involvement, and continuous improvement. Research on *Lean* in health care settings is limited. It has morphed into a cult, of sorts, especially in healthcare organizations that can afford to pay consulting firms up to \$10 million in boondoggle fees using taxpayers’ public dime.

Lean is often credited with having largely been created by Toyota’s founders — Sakichi Toyoda and his sons — but it also dates back to Henry Ford’s advancement of automobile manufacturing factories in the early 1900’s. Ford and Toyoda hated inefficiencies and sought to root out “waste” in manufacturing.

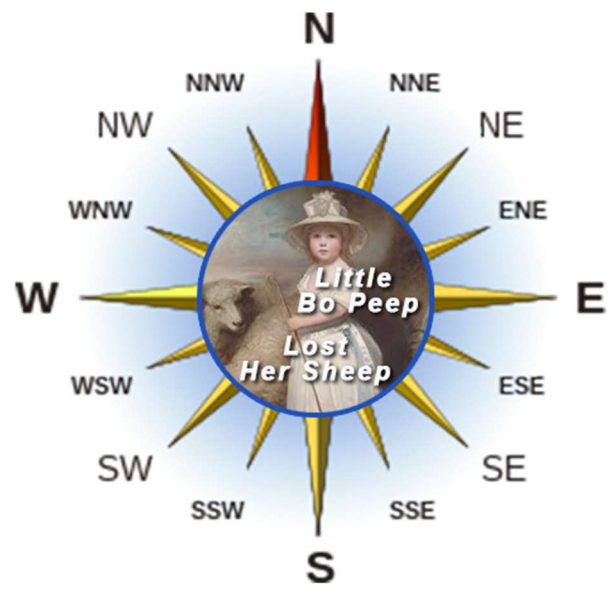
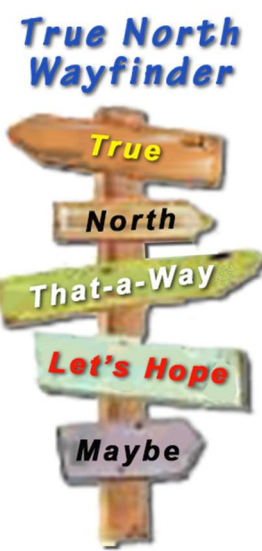
A key *Lean* principle is “*True North*,” a concept playing a key role in the journey toward *Lean* management on the road to organizational improvements. *True North* has come to mean the direction to go toward in order to reach operational excellence.

Associated within *Lean* is another concept called “*Hoshin Kanri*,” which is a method for ensuring that a company’s strategic goals drive progress and action at every level within the company using methods to eliminate the “waste” that comes from inconsistent direction and poor communication. The words “*hoshin*” and “*kanri*” mean “*direction*” and “*management*,” respectively. Used together they mean “*How do we manage our direction?*” *Hoshin Kanri* is alternatively called “*Policy Deployment*,” and is used in conjunction with another concept, called “*Kaizen*.”

Kaizen combines two Japanese Kanji characters, “*Kai*” (*change*) and “*zen*” (*good*) — meaning “*continuous improvement*.”

San Francisco’s Department of Public Health (SFDPH) has been big on *Kaizen* for a number of years. Now its big on *Hoshin Kanri*. SFDPH has spent heavily on both *Kaizen* and *Hoshin Kanri* training for its managers (albeit with demonstrably little to show for it).

Who knew that *Policy Deployment* comes with a \$10 million price tag for public health organizations using public governments’ pot-of-gold — or scarce — coffers, just to teach managers how to *manage their directions*?



Help! Bo also lost her “True North” ...