

## Respect for People: A Pillar of Lean | 094

Welcome to Lean Leadership for Ops Managers, the podcast for leaders in Ops Management who want to spark improvement, foster engagement, and boost problem solving - AND still get their day job done. Here's your host, Leadership Trainer, Lean Enthusiast, and Spy Thriller Junkie, Jamie V. Parker.

**Jamie:** [00:00:28] It's Jamie Parker here, and we have a little bit of a treat for you today. GE has a private like an internal podcast. It's called And On That Note. Don't you just love the play on words like andon like pull the andon chord. And on that note I love it. Super creative. And this internal podcast is just for GE employees.

And, and on that note is hosted by Latoya Moore and Brette Smith. And their first guest was Larry Culp, who of course is a fantastic leader who has really demonstrated respect for people and continuous improvement and kind of at the enterprise level. And so I was very just honored to be invited to be a guest on this podcast as well.

And of course, you can't Google and on that note or go to iTunes and find it because it's just for their internal employees. But we have some clips for you today. So that's that's really exciting to share. Now, Brette and Latoya and I, we talked for an hour. We're not going to share this whole hour long conversation, but we do have some of those sections, some of the conversation sections that we want to share with you today.

**Jamie:** [00:01:40] So who are these co-hosts? Let me tell you. So Brette and Latoya co-host this podcast, they have a ton of energy. They really just bring in a fun conversation. I think you're really going to get to enjoy the energy they bring to this conversation. But who are they? So I want to introduce you to Latoya moore, who is a lean leader within supply chain of GE Aviation, and also to Brette Smith, who is an executive human resources lean leader at GE Aviation.

And they do a great job with this podcast. And so we are going to dive in. The three of us are going to dive in in this episode to a conversation about pillars of Lean. So you're going to hear us talk about continuous improvement as a pillar. You're going to hear us talk about respect for people as a pillar. And we're going to bring a few of these clips in. I think you're really going to enjoy it. So let's just go ahead and get to it.

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**Brette:** [00:02:37] Jamie, welcome to and on that note.

**Jamie:** [00:02:40] Oh, thank you so much for the invitation. I'm super excited for this conversation.

**Brette:** [00:02:44] Yes, I'm actually really excited about the episode title because it's R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Find out what it means to GE. So we at GE, we have we actually have some pillars of our systematic approach to lean and they are respect for people and continuous improvement. Can you tell us about kind of your understanding or the meaning of those to you?

**Jamie:** [00:03:05] Yeah, absolutely. When I think about those pillars and particularly the combination of those two pillars is that when we bring them together, what we're really talking about is creating more value for all stakeholders. So not just shareholders, but shareholders are included, but shareholders are not the only group. Right? It's all stakeholders which are team members and their families and the community and our vendors and suppliers. And when we look at them independently, continuous improvement.

I have a client who actually has a core value that they say is achieved through learning. And I think that really kind of encompasses this idea of continuous improvement, which is really about becoming a better learner and incorporating learning into everything that you do every day so that you can continuously improve and get better and not just getting better from results and outcomes, but getting better from the process.

**LaToya:** [00:03:55] So what's kind of the the hardest thing that you've had to overcome with regards to getting people to understand that it is a stakeholder thing that's lean.

**Jamie:** [00:04:05] Part of it is, is for me helping for myself to realize and come to that understanding because I'm a recovering command and control manager I grew up in hit your numbers, improve your numbers, get your results. And so I was actually really good at delivering those results. I mean, I was getting promoted and getting promoted quickly. And because I was promoted quickly, I would not be there to have to clean up the mess when it all started falling apart. Right. Because it wouldn't be sustainable.

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I know, right. Typical. That's exactly what was happening. And eventually people like turnover would be higher and people would burn out and it wasn't something that was going to be a good practice. And I knew I wanted to change. Like I knew I didn't want to keep managing and leading that way, but I didn't know any other way. And that was when I really started diving into the practice of lean continuous improvement and pulling a respect for people part into it and recognizing that in respect for people, not just like, Hey, let's be nice to each other, not just in the way we interact with people, but recognizing that there's this human element when we think about work.

Work is a human experience, business is a human experience. And so we wanted to have both of those and when both of those come together. And so I think the first thing was for me, I almost had to convince myself or experience it myself before it was is anything that I could talk about or help support others with, for sure.

**LaToya:** [00:05:25] So what was that experience? The one that kind of got you over the hump?

**Jamie:** [00:05:29] We were traveling in LA. I was in LA visiting a plant. My boss had traveled out there with me. We were I remember we were in the rental car. We're driving in a rental car through LA, which probably means like stopping a lot. Right. And I was having I don't know what you want to call it, that's like third life crisis thing, whatever it was, where it's like, you know what? I thought I was going to be doing something more. Like, I thought I was going to be having a bigger impact. I thought I was going to be, you know, like changing education policy for the country or, you know, having something in traffic. I.

**Brette:** [00:06:01] I feel like that would be quite the traffic jam to get all of that in play.

**LaToya:** [00:06:04] And it feels like all of the windows were down. So the smell may have been affecting you.

**Jamie:** [00:06:08] It might have been, yes. But yeah. I mean, I was I was like I was so hard on myself about like I don't understand what I'm doing because I'm working in an organization. And sure, it's it's fine. But we print stuff like we're not saving lives. We make we make print.

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And, you know, he talked to me, he said, well, hold on just a minute. Let me let me reframe this a little bit for you. And he started telling me about George, who was a team member in the LA plant because, you know, he grew up in a house with three families sharing the same apartment. And his mother didn't speak English, and he thought that he had a certain life ahead of him. And now through the development and through the investment and through your leadership, what's happening is, you know, he's grown and he's advanced and he's had his career and he's giving his children opportunities that he never thought he'd be able to give them.

And he did like story after story after story of people that were in my span of care. And that was really that moment where I realized so much about, hey, this is about this human experience and the influence and the impact that we have. So even that conversation, I went into it selfishly, right? Like I thought I was going to make a bigger difference and like, what am I doing?

It's all about me when I went into that conversation. But recognizing coming out of it that the influence we have as leaders is just so great and the impact we're having, we may not even recognize, but it's there and we can either keep going business as usual and it just is what it is and not think about it and just try and get the work done and get the work out. The door, or we can decide to be intentional and be purposeful and thoughtful about what type of influence we want to have.

**Brette:** [00:07:40] Two things on that. The first one is, I love that you spent you said span of care. That's a very unique way to think about the people that you're responsible for and their development. Second, Latoya and I need to go to LA immediately, breathe some of that smog and get stuck in traffic because I feel like there's a revolution coming our way.

**LaToya:** [00:07:59] It has to be. There has to be.

**Brette:** [00:08:00] There has to be. I can think of no one better. Latoya being stuck in traffic with smog. Other than you.

**LaToya:** [00:08:06] Oh, that's amazing. Thank you.

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**Jamie:** [00:08:09] That's real friendship.

**Brette:** [00:08:11] That's friendship right there. All right. So you talked about this command and control leader and you told us about how you made this kind of transformation mindset of this plan of care. Tell me about the impact that that has had on you as a leader and where it has kind of driven you in your career because you're no longer with that organization. Right. You've gone on to do other things. So tell us about that.

**Jamie:** [00:08:34] You know, when I think about having this transformation, which, by the way, I would say is ongoing, like I say, I'm a recovering, not recovered. It is ongoing. And I still today have to be intentional and remind myself about how I want to show up. Because what I've noticed is that when the stakes are high is when I'm more likely to revert back to kind of these older ways of naturally kind of taking control and just giving out directions, spouting out and get it done. Kind of stopped, right?

Get it done. Just make it happen. I don't care. Just make it up. And I think that's important. Recognizes it's a journey, not necessarily a destination. You know, here I was in this organization, we're practicing continuous improvement and the continuous improvement side I felt like was coming relatively naturally for me. It made sense, it was logical, it was cool, and we were starting to have some kind of pretty quick wins. I was like, Oh goodness, we've reduced lead time, we've improved quality. We're having all of this, these wins, but it still really felt like it was. We were just dragging people along like, come on, do this lean stuff with us. Let's go.

**Brette:** [00:09:34] You know, you want to. Yeah.

**Jamie:** [00:09:37] And so it's like, what in the world? This is so great. Why doesn't everybody want to do this? What's going on? And when I really investigated, I went out into plants, really listening, trying to understand what's happening. Why is there this so much tension that I didn't expect? And what I realized is that we were spending a whole lot of time working on how we improve the work that frontline team members are doing right, how we're improving the work processes of what they do.

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And meanwhile, we hadn't really changed how we were leading. So we would say, our leaders are out there in every plant. We blame the process, not the person. Then a high profile failure happens. And what do they do? Hey, who ran the job? Who signed? Let's go get the order form. Let's see who signed the initials. Who signed it? What happened?

**Brette:** [00:10:21] Who did the inspection. Yeah. Who was on that shift. Yeah.

**Jamie:** [00:10:24] Yes. And our leaders were saying, you know what, we want your improvements. You do the work. You know what? We need to improve. You create value. So we want your ideas of how we can improve. And then people would give ideas and we start to explain why that wouldn't work. What we were saying didn't match how we were leading.

And so that's why we were having all of this tension. It was so difficult. And so that was really the shift where I started moving all of my focus to really saying, okay, how do we help leaders make the adjustments in what they believe in, how they think in what they do and their behaviors and how they interact and the systems that they put into place so that it can enable this continuous improvement in respect for people and lean methodologies to show up in how we work every day.

**LaToya:** [00:11:06] Yeah, it sounds like they went to my mom's school of business. She was the queen of Do As I say and not as I do. LaToya, you need to eat your broccoli as she's sitting there eating a sleeve of thin mints. I'm going, That is not the same thing, not the same thing. So I love how we are now kind of holding these leaders feet to the fire. Hey, your walk needs to match this talk that you're doing right? And if the two don't match, we need to reevaluate that. That's awesome.

**Jamie:** [00:11:37] And recognizing that it's not easy to do, right? I mean, it might be simple. It sounds simple. But when you think about leaders who are in you know, in their positions, they're typically under a lot of pressure to deliver results. It's you know, it's hey, okay, this is great. And how are you getting results? What's the what's your bottom line?

You know, and sometimes it can almost feel like a what have you done for me lately, right? Because I was great. But now this month, it's not working. Last quarter not working. It seems so simple. It seems like, oh,

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my goodness, why are these managers so bad? Because they say they should just make good decisions and be nice to people and care about people. And that sounds great.

Like we can have friendships, we know how to give and serve in our friendships and in our familial relationships. And so it's not that we don't know how to do it, it's just that the situation is different when you're in a manager role because inevitably you have typically some sort of power structure there, right? There's some sort of reporting relationship. And even if you. Try and be collaborative. It's still there in the back of people's heads.

When we start getting into this pot and mixing all of these things together, it gets a little bit harder to do to figure out, Well, how can I deliver on these expectations and treat people well and hold people accountable? Because it's disrespectful if we have people who aren't pulling their weight, how do I get this all done? And all of a sudden there's complexity and it's just not as easy as sometimes the little memes on social media make it make it look and sound.

**Brette:** [00:13:04] So what would you say to a leader who says to you, look, I'm trying to be respectful, I'm trying to drive a continuous improvement organization, but I just don't quite know how to make that shift because my reputation that I have built up, maybe over the last decade or so doesn't quite align to that. How do I not freak out my team but at least get started to building relationships?

**Jamie:** [00:13:28] Yeah. And recognize that they probably won't trust you and believe it at first. They can have their doubts and you're going to demonstrate that over time in repetition and consistency. I'm a fan of saying, Hey, you know what? I have not been leading very well. I've been so focused on the numbers that I've forgotten how to really develop and support and make sure that you have what you need, whatever it is, right, whatever it is that you've been doing.

Because here's the thing is they know it like you're not telling them something they don't already know. They've already seen it this whole time. They already know it and they already think that what you're doing is you're showing that you actually see it, too, because they've been seeing it. And now when you see it, you know what? I want to make a commitment to change and I recognize that it's probably not a switch I can flip and it's going to take some time and I'm going to fall down and have to get back up.

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And I am just so gracious that you're willing to go on this journey with me and, you know, the grace and space you'll give as well as the honest feedback that you'll give, because I'm committed to being a better leader for you, provided it's coming from the heart.

**LaToya:** [00:14:25] If I have a manager, a people leader that is command and control, how do I give them the right feedback to show up in a different way? So what should I say so that it makes sense or how should I approach it?

**Jamie:** [00:14:41] I think part of it depends on the relationship. If I feel like, Hey, I've got a good enough relationship that I can be more direct than than I think you can do that if you're a little nervous or hesitant because they are command and control and you're not sure how they're going to respond and are they going to be open to feedback? I always like to phrase when I'm managing up, I like to phrase things and frame things in terms of what that person cares about.

And so if that person really cares about productivity or that person really cares about quality or that person really cares about consistency, whatever it is, then I look for common ground. What's our common ground with that? One thing I say, you know what? I know we both are really trying to make sure that we deliver high quality at the end of the day. And I want to make sure that I'm able to contribute in a way that gets us there.

There are a couple of things that I think might be helpful for me to be able to contribute better. And then I might say, you know, when I know how what the positive impact is of the things I'm doing, it really helps me make sure I stay on the right track, stay confident, and deliver consistently every day. I would love it if you'd be willing to just share more positive feedback for me.

**LaToya:** [00:15:49] So I'm going to need you to give me your personal phone number so that you can always help me with those types of conversations. You know, these.

**Jamie:** [00:15:58] They're hard conversations. And the reality is that part of being a leader, part of being a professional contributor in a work environment, is that we're going to have hard conversations. And in



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fact, if we were to talk about respect for people, I would say avoiding hard conversations does not demonstrate respect for people, because at that point, what's happening is I care more about my feelings and my uncomfortableness and I'm more concerned about my is it going to be hard for me and what's going to happen or are they going to hate me?

And I don't know. And it's all of that. And if I'm doing that, I'm not respecting the other person. And so I know it's hard because if we have a leader, a people leader who's not maybe acting and leading in the way we would want, we kind of want to put it all on them. And they do own the responsibility. They have the burden as the leader.

But I also think just as a professional, we have we also have a responsibility to have hard conversations and share back. And I think if you're respectful in how you do it, then recognizing that the other ends that I should be receiving feedback because as a as a leader, you want to make sure that you're supporting people and you're helping them be the best version of themselves, contribute in ways that they may not even have realized yet.

**LaToya:** [00:17:03] It's kind of like the getting that feedback is your vocal mirror to let you know how it is that you're showing up every day. I really, really like that.

**Jamie:** [00:17:10] Yeah. And I would even take it a step further for leaders, which is if you want people to be open to the feedback you give them, you should probably ask for feedback and be open first. The question is, well, when's the last time that you have truly, meaningfully, authentically ask for feedback and listen to it and considered potentially even taking action on it?

**LaToya:** [00:17:30] Yeah, just sat in that for a minute because sometimes it isn't. Comfortable, like you were saying. And it's like, oh, I don't want to I don't want to do this because it's uncomfortable for me to hear that I'm not showing up the way that I want to. And then to your point, to go ahead and act on that.

**Brette:** [00:17:44] So what are the important things I think about is is leaders are going to the gemba, right? That we're going to where the problems, where they're felt, where they're experienced. So how do I demonstrate respect for people and continuous improvement? Maybe when I'm on a Gemba walk, maybe

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through the questions I ask or what I do, could you help us kind of understand that a little better for how we do that?

**Jamie:** [00:18:06] Yeah, and I think it starts, you know, if you're doing a Gemba Walk, even if it's you're just on the floor with folks at the Gemba. Right. Is that one is to recognize that there are different purposes for different types of conversations and interactions. And, you know, I like to think of these different leadership interactions on this continuum from telling to asking to listening, right. And so we might be directing and providing direction. We might be sharing, like sharing my experience with you might be teaching.

All three of those are very heavy. On the telling side, coaching is where we really get into really asking because when we're coaching, the other person owns the answer and owns the improvement and I'm just asking questions to help them work through their thought processes. And then connecting on the last side is, is more of that empathetic listening, connecting with no agenda.

That means a lot of times I've got to put my destructiveness to the side. The problem is that when I'm even if I have that intention, like, yes, that's what I'm going to do, is that directing sneaks in to our questions often. And so we'll say, Well, have you thought about trying this?

**LaToya:** [00:19:08] Right, right, right. And I'm like, Oh, because it.

**Brette:** [00:19:11] Has a question mark. Does it mean it is a question 100%?

**Jamie:** [00:19:15] Absolutely. How can we ask open questions that are open ended? They're not leading. They're non judgmental. And I might say, well, what have you thought about trying? What else have you thought about trying? What do you think is happening here? What do you think is causing that? What else do you think might be causing that? What do you think we should do?

**LaToya:** [00:19:33] Jamie, thank you so much for all of the truth bombs on this podcast. The only problem now is that we're out of time and just like any other environment, when you have a problem, you pull the and on and that's what we want you to do at this point. Jamie Parker Are you ready to pull the and on?

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**Jamie:** [00:19:56] I'm Jamie V. Parker. In this episode, we discuss the pillars of respect for people and continuous improvement. And on that note.