

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

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] One of the greatest priorities in today's business environment, is attracting and retaining talented and dedicated team members. The last two episodes went right to this priority, with Elizabeth Swan talking about navigating the intangibles of leadership and Moe Carrick talking about being vulnerable and engaging in purposeful connection. In today's episode, we're taking a slightly different spin on the same topic.

As Tracy O'Rourke explains, the critical impact of meaningful leader routines on the engagement of a company's workforce. Now, if you've been tuning in to the podcast, you've met Tracy before. She joined us back in episode 99, along with Katie Anderson as we dialoged about collaboration over competition. And the three of us actually recorded that episode live in person together.

Now, during that time, I got to know more about Tracy's background, her expertise, and her super fun and joyful personality. And I'm really thrilled to share more of her brilliance with you today. Tracy has worked in continuous improvement for more than 25 years, helping problem solvers solve process problems. Yeah. Say that one three times fast.

She's a lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt co author of The Problem Solvers Toolkit Toolkit with our previous guest, Elizabeth Swan, by the way. She's co-founder of the Just In Time Cafe, along with Elizabeth. She's also a Lean Six Sigma instructor at UC San Diego and a process improvement zealot. Now, Tracy is the chair for the SoCal Lean Network. She's on the Process Improvement Advisory Board for UC San Diego and is a West Region Board member of the Association of Manufacturing Excellence. Tracey and I share common beliefs about the importance of leader routines in building great improvement cultures. So let's dive in now.

Jamie: [00:02:31] Tracy, welcome to the show today.

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

Tracy: [00:02:34] Thank you. Jamie, I'm super happy to be here with you.

Jamie: [00:02:37] Yes, I am so glad that you're here to. We were rerecorded a podcast together in Mexico, which was so fun.

Tracy: [00:02:45] It was.

Jamie: [00:02:46] But glad to have you back and talk about some lighter routines today. So before we get started, though, let's learn a little bit more about you. So tell us a little bit about the type of work you do and and kind of who you help solve, what type of problems.

Tracy: [00:02:59] Gosh. Okay. I won't I won't spend too many too long on this. But I have been doing this for 25 years. And there's definitely been an evolution in what I do. And I would definitely say that I was really helping problem solvers solve process problems, right. Using to make. So I would most of my time early on was training people on, you know, green belt and black belt and skills like that. And then things took a turn. And then also I was doing Lean to a Lean came a little bit later. But then, you know, people were still wanting help with culture. They said, you know, our leaders aren't really supporting us or we have problems. And then leaders were even recognizing they weren't doing what they should.

So I guess the problem I was helping people solve is the culture isn't what we want. How do we get an environment that we want? And that's pretty much what where I've been really spending more of my time not just helping leaders become better leaders, but helping the culture, really analyzing the cultural puzzle and helping leaders be reflective on the culture, what they what it is, why it is the way it is, what they want it to be, and how do they make it something that they want it to be and how do they what's their role in that?

Jamie: [00:04:21] Oh, yeah, that's good.

Tracy: [00:04:22] Yeah. And what's surprisingly surprising, too, though, is lately I've been helping a lot of organizations with strategic planning.

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

Jamie: [00:04:31] Oh, I just got a call about that or an email about that today. Like, Hey. Yeah.

Tracy: [00:04:37] Yeah. And maybe it's because maybe it's this time of year, but I've helped four or five clients now with strategic planning, and I love that work, too. I mean, I you know, we have a system for doing it and they seem to like it. Three of those were virtual. So a virtual team using mural. And I think we have a webinar that we highlighted because it's something everybody can do and a lot of people do strategic planning.

So that's where I've been. I've been spending some time. And then also I think the other big piece is that teams helping teams be be more collaborative and work better together. Yeah, especially different teams from different departments where, you know, they tend to be very voice of department. And then how do they how do they solve problems better together? Not just an individual problem solver, but teams and team problem solving. So that's kind of where I've been. I've been mostly my space has been, Yeah, I love it.

Jamie: [00:05:39] You always do so much fun stuff and it was great hearing some of that, some of the stories from your career. All right. Well, then help us understand a little bit about what you believe about leadership. So just kind of something it could be a quote or a principle, a value, something that you feel really embodies your beliefs about leadership.

Tracy: [00:05:57] So I think one of the biggest ones is leaders should always be learning. Leaders should always be learning. And if you're on a journey to learn and you want to get better, that's always a good thing. You don't always have the answers. You don't always know everything. And if you're learning and it's okay that people know you're learning, I think there's an element of vulnerability that feels uncomfortable for leaders sometimes where they feel like, Oh, I can't let people know I'm learning this. Why? You're a human, you're your person, you're experimenting.

The fact that you're investing in yourself to be a better leader is a good thing. Yes, I would say I did a leadership course for an organization and I asked them, why do we need lean leaders? And I've asked this question many times in many, many different trainings and organizations and. Her name was Rose. She worked at Costco. And she said, well, if we don't grow as leaders, our people don't grow. And I was

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

like, I need to give you a hug. Yeah. Like, that was the best thing I had ever heard because it was about her people. And that's why we need to grow. And I just loved that. Yes.

Jamie: [00:07:14] So good. You know, I was I had a meeting earlier today with a client with, like, an executive team, a client organization. And we going they're going through some we're building some leadership curriculum and stuff. And so they're kind of piloting through some of this content to reflect on it and have some of that dialog for themselves and process it for themselves. And as we were going through this conversation, I'm like, okay, I think at this point I really need to model for them what it looks like to be vulnerable and show like that.

You're still working on something yourself. And so I wanted this whole like, okay, here's what I'm working on. I'm really impatient. I interrupt people and I recognize that, you know, as people are talking, I'm I'm basically listening, waiting to respond. And I'm doing that more than I want to be doing that. And, you know, and so I just went in through it and explained, you know, how I'm going about trying to get better at that. But the whole mood really shifted when I did that.

And it was just interesting to me to see because this executive team is now going to then have conversations with their directors who are then going to have conversations with their leader, their managers, and who are then going to have conversations with their leads and how important it is to set that learning vulnerability environment from the very beginning so that they can continue to model that as well. And it just struck me, as you were saying, that I was like, you know, I don't know if I was quite as purposeful about it, but that's really what I was doing.

Tracy: [00:08:34] Yeah. And there's this other thing that I've really tried to embrace as a consultant to, not because I'm helping leaders and, you know, I've noticed different approaches from all kinds of people. And sometimes the leaders know something, and so they're learning. But I sometimes hear people say, Oh, he didn't know that, or, well, why don't you do that? And it's sort of this judgment that happens. And I'm always in the realm of coaching.

And I just have really embraced this idea that you meet people where they are and they may not they may know all about quarter, but they know nothing about Lean or they know nothing about Domain, but they

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

they know PDK like the back of their hand. And it's not about judgment. I really see it as everyone is on a journey and you have to meet people where they are to help them to the next stage or the next step in their journey. And there's no wrong place to be in the journey. And I feel like people feel like they're that, Oh, that's wrong. You're doing your work.

And, you know, to me it's it's about recognizing how you get better and that journey never ends. You don't want it to end. And that, I think, helps you have empathy for people that are that are learning and growing. Because I help people that have been doing this a long time and some people have only just started. They're just on the journey. It doesn't help to judge or make them feel like they are. They have such a long way to go and they don't know anything. And so anyways, I've really embodied that as well. Yes.

Jamie: [00:10:12] Yeah, I love where you said it was like wrong place on the journey, which is awesome. So let's talk about culture then just a little bit because you are talking about kind of being deliberate and going after the culture you want and what's the leader's role. So our listeners are operations executives, operations managers. And so what do you view as kind of their role in creating a learning and improvement culture?

Tracy: [00:10:37] Gosh. Well, I would say there's two really big pieces that an operations leader, really any leader, but even specifically an operations leader, and that is, number one, create ideal conditions for process improvement to thrive. How do you do that? So, you know, we've talked about this many times, Jamie, where you know what, how how do we remove blame? How do we make sure that people know we're focused on the process and not the person per say? How what can we do to reduce fear? What are the things we need to do to create ideal conditions so people feel comfortable in their ability and recognizing we got problems. We don't know how to solve them yet.

We got to figure out root cause. And you know what? We're experimenting, which means we could make a mistake. So there's a lot of vulnerability in process improvement. And how do we create ideal conditions for process improvement to thrive? And that's tough. That is tough for an organization and an operations manager to realize, Oh, man, I actually am doing something that is not allowing that to happen. And that's kind of an aha moment and that's not easy. Sometimes it's not easy. So that's the first one is creating

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

ideal conditions and the second one is. Commit to building the problem solving muscle. So as operations managers and we've talked about this to Jamie, because I remember you told me you were recovering.

Jamie: [00:12:05] You're recovering command and control manager.

Tracy: [00:12:09] And control manager. Yes. So so to me, committing to the problem solving to building problem solvers means you have a very mentor like or coach like philosophy. And guess what? That takes time. And that is probably the biggest struggle I see operations managers deal with, is they got stuff they got to get done and they got to get it done now. So why do I do it? Do I tell them what to do or do I invest in them and let them figure it out? And that is the biggest struggle that I see.

But if you can commit to building the problem solving muscle and. A certain percentage of time you are doing that. And those are the things that I think an operations leader should really be doing, focusing on, okay, am I creating ideal conditions and am I committing to building problem solvers? I mean, there are times in an emergency or there are times when you do have to be directive and that is appropriate. Yeah.

And how often are we doing the mentoring and the and the building of the problem solvers, too, Because that's easy to just forget about and people? Well, when I have time, well, nobody has time.

Jamie: [00:13:25] I know. That's the thing I say all the time. It's like, you know, after a training class or after a you know, you're learning this something yourself. You're like, Well, what are you going to do this? How are you going to do it? It's like, Oh, well, when this happens, when I have time, then I'll do it. I'm like, So you're saying never.

Tracy: [00:13:39] Right, exactly. Yeah. It's like I'd important enough to me put on my calendar so I have time.

Jamie: [00:13:48] Yes, I love that. And let's talk about this a little bit. Right. So it's not important enough to put on my calendar or what is important enough because this is something you do a lot of leadership development and support. And I work with leaders as well. And we both part of what we both work on with them is leader routines. And I want to I want to dig into this. So let's start with that. So when we think

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

about when you think about leader routines, what do you mean by routines and why? Like why is this even part of your development for leaders?

Tracy: [00:14:17] Yes. So I love this question because I think some of the challenges are leaders. Pretty often recognize, Oh, this isn't the culture that I want this my people aren't doing what I want or my people aren't behaving the way I want. And what do I need to do to change the culture? And so so they see that there's some sort of dissatisfaction there. Yet sometimes it doesn't translate into I'm not doing the right behaviors or I'm not doing I could be doing something differently in a routine that can help that. And sometimes that doesn't actually, that's not the direct line.

And so when we start talking about routines and later routines, sometimes I get the deer in the headlights like, Well, so why am I doing this? Exactly? Especially if the organization has never done this before. So I worked with an organization for eight years that was a government organization. They had never done any of these little routines before, and we ended up implementing six different routines. And it was really interesting to watch because they kind of saw it at another organization and they knew other people were doing it that they know, but they're like, Well, hey, we're gonna try it. And they were really feeling awkward about the whole thing. So. So if the culture isn't what you want.

Tracy: [00:15:37] Then. Something needs to change. Yeah. And yet, if you wanted to change, that happens with routine and discipline. So what kinds of things should routine should a leader be doing to promote a culture of continuous improvement? Because if you don't have a culture of continuous improvement, it's probably because you don't have any routines. Finger In your day, that's because you're not doing anything. Continuous improvement. Do you ask people what they're working on in terms of improvement? Do you you know, if you have a green belt program? Do you let people just do a green belt project and then that's it? Or do you require that they do two a year from then on? And are you asking about them? Simple things like that.

So those are just very simple behavioral questions that you could put on an agenda. But there's very specific routines that are very let's just say that they a lot of organizations that do lean well or doing some of these routines. And so they're sort of considered later standard work. So the work we always talk about is the one best way to do something. And so what if leaders had that? So that's what Leader standard

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

work is, is there's these certain behaviors and routines that help generate a culture of continuous improvement.

Jamie: [00:16:56] Yeah, absolutely.

Tracy: [00:16:57] Kinds of routines like Leader Gemba walks or shuttle boards or huddle meetings or a reflection leader reflection on your day and where you're spending your time. And is that where you should be spending your time? And if you're not, how do you do more of the things you should be doing just reflecting every day on are you spending the time where you need to be spending your time? And then like things like idea boards could be a routine. You know, there's a leader element in idea boards and there's so many actually. And if you have any that you have as favorites, do you have any favorites? Yeah.

Jamie: [00:17:37] Well, I definitely loved that you brought up reflection like a daily reflection and as a leader routine because it's something that, you know, even I struggle with to have consistency in my in my schedule for that. But the problem is, if I get away from it, then I'm not getting better on purpose, Right? Like it's more of the hamster wheel thing. And so, you know, what's what I. So I definitely like that you kind of spoke to that and included that for sure.

And I and I think that those you know when I think about these leader routines is like which what are the routines? What are the activities that are most important for developing your people, for developing for developing that problem solving muscle that you are talking about, for not just doing work, not just managing work, but helping to develop people. And that's where I think some of those daily, like daily huddles come into play.

One on ones to me are critical. Like I always have one on ones with somebody on my team, right? Always. And that's something that is so important. It's going to go on my calendar and it's not it's not missed, right? It's never missed. It's never what gets sacrificed, which is I think what makes like this is like, how do you choose? It's like, well, what is it that's so important that you don't never sacrifice it, right?

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

Tracy: [00:18:43] Yep. Yep. And that leader reflection of saying if let's say it is important, but you always miss it, is it because of something you're doing? It's because somebody is pulling you into something. And if someone else is pulling you into something, how do you adjust that and make an adjustment because it is important to you?

Jamie: [00:18:58] Yeah. Then you solve for that problem, right? So it's like, Oh, I said, this was so important that I never sacrificed it, but I'm having to sacrifice it. I'm not getting it done. Well, guess what? Now you just raised a problem, and now you can solve for that problem.

Tracy: [00:19:11] Absolutely. And you know, I hear that from people. Sometimes I go, Oh, I have a 1i have a one on one scheduled, but we don't actually meet very often.

Jamie: [00:19:20] Like, Oh, finger that too. It's like breaks my heart. I mean, and I and I say that, you know, like just because unfortunately a lot of people do one on ones very poorly. So for a lot of people like I'm so glad my one on one is getting canceled because it's such a waste of time. And I'm like, okay, well, let's make sure we do them effectively.

Tracy: [00:19:36] Yeah, But yeah, well, the other thing too is I'm also I want to I try to be intentional about what routines they should be incorporating and what's the what's the cadence and then the insertion of how many routines. Right. Because, you know, we all know leaders are busy, especially operations managers. They're learning new behaviors and they're going to feel overwhelmed if we do too many. So there's a bunch of routines out there, but some of them might work better for certain times based on where you are in the journey or what you're trying to accomplish. Right?

If you really are feeling like people don't have ideas, maybe you do the idea work. But if you really feel like leaders need to have a better awareness about process, Leader Gemba walks would be great. So, you know, there's a there's a sort of a menu of routines and that's where that cultural piece comes in, that cultural analysis or the puzzle that you're trying to say. You're trying to help them solve this puzzle, or you know what? What's going to work for this?

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

Organization with the leaders we have today. What are they trying to achieve and what routine might help them get there? So that's really important to not just like saying, okay, we're going to do all these routines because I've said that, too.

Jamie: [00:20:53] I love what you said there, which is like there's not like one, right? Here's the here's the seven. Go do these seven things. Is that it's so dependent on what problem are you trying to solve? What culture are you trying to create? Where are you on this journey? Which should give all of our listeners really kind of some relief? And like, this is for you to figure out what are the routines that are going to help you and your team.

Tracy: [00:21:15] And just like when I go into an organization and they're implementing process improvement, I really like to try to get a cycle of learning or process improvement in as soon as possible, because I want to see what the roadblocks are in that organization for implementing improvements or feel like you go through to make or PDK, and then you go, Oh, why are they slowing down in the implement phase or or in the do phase? And then you start to see these cultural things pop up and then and then you say, okay, we need to assess that for things.

We pick, you know, we use that as strategy potentially for where what areas might be more open. What about this area? How do we get them on board? Well, it's the same thing for these routines. So if you implement six and you don't know what kind of roadblocks you might run into, they're all going to fail. Yes. Yeah. So let's talk.

Jamie: [00:22:08] About that then, because I this is what I see, too, as I seem like we're going to do leader standard work because we read it in a book that that's what we're supposed to do. That's what I did. By the way, the first time that I did was like, Oh yeah, we read David Mann's book and we need to do literacy to work and let's do a whole program and the whole thing.

I have a whole episode on like how I failed on it. But what I'll see is that they try to like, redesign their entire schedule in one fell swoop, like, Oh, well, we aren't, you know, we're going to add Gemba walks and we're going to do Tier one meetings and we're going to do problem solving sessions and we're going

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

to do this. And and now you've got these six things that have been like put onto the schedule and then they like two days into it like, Oh my gosh, this is so awful, right?

Tracy: [00:22:49] This never works. Exactly. Yeah. So what do.

Jamie: [00:22:54] You see as like what are maybe either some either pitfalls to avoid or tips for someone who wants to start bringing more of these leader routines into their work and how they lead.

Tracy: [00:23:04] So I'd say the first one, which we talked about briefly, is be intentional about which ones and really commit to it as much as possible before implementing a bunch. And then because what's going to happen is. They are new routine. So first of all, sometimes I don't know why they still have a challenge with I have to do huddle meetings and then we'll have more process improvement. I don't get it. And so they don't necessarily understand what that's going to do. So it's a new behavior.

I think one of the biggest obstacles is leaders feel awkward. You know, at first, if they haven't seen it done before and it's not something that's already ongoing in the organization, it feels awkward. And leaders don't like to feel awkward, especially in the limelight of leading their people. And so that could be a challenge. And then the other challenge, too, is they don't always know, okay, this feels weird. I don't know. I'm uncomfortable and I'm not really sure I see the value in this yet.

I mean, I know you're telling me to do these huddles and these huddle meetings, but it feels awkward and I don't really know. I don't really see a value yet. So because people aren't used to it, right? They're getting into the routine. So they don't always see the value. They only know from a mindset, okay, I know I'm supposed to do this, but how is it going to go? So I'd say those are sometimes the biggest challenges and just recognizing that that is going it is a rite of passage. You're going to feel awkward.

It's you're going to feel like you're not sure why this is adding value or how it's going to add value. But you've got to try it. You've got to experiment and then see how it works and then ask people, how is this going? And that's another thing people are comfortable with. Like, okay, how is this Ricky here's like this and this works, right?

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

Jamie: [00:24:55] Yeah. And the other thing I think too, that goes along with that, where I've seen kind of similarly is like, okay, so we're we're here, we're get some value and we're doing this. We're like, Oh, look at how cool this is. And then it's just like, wrong starts to just decline. And then it just is something that we do to go through the motions or to to check something off the list. But then we stop getting the value from it and we don't stop to say, Whoa, something's broken here. Let's go back and reevaluate and assess what's happening. Why is that happening? What do we need to adjust? Yeah.

Tracy: [00:25:26] Yeah, I agree. Like huddle boards are a great example. So a lot of times I see people putting things on huddle boards that they only update monthly, but they're meeting at the Huddle Board three times a week. But the metrics not changing because it's a monthly metric. Okay. Do you care about that? No. Okay. What do you care about on a daily basis?

What what what is the top of your mind kind of walking through it and, you know, and that whole experimentation piece. And so all of these things really help change culture because these are all things that maybe they weren't doing before in terms of collaboration or PDCA thing, a process or routine. And so it's really interesting to watch.

Jamie: [00:26:07] Yeah, for sure. All right. So then I also want to ask you about so there's I guarantee you somebody's listening, right? It was like, hey, totally get it. This is cool. But like, I don't like, ain't nobody got time for that. I'm already struggling. I don't have bandwidth. I can't get enough things done as it is. And now you want me to do something every single day or three times a week or whatever it is? Yeah, whatever the cadence is. Now, you want me to do this too, when I'm already behind every day. So what do you like? How do you react or respond to to that person?

Tracy: [00:26:40] Gosh, there's so many things that that we could say because, you know, in general, you could even go talk about engagement, right? So if we're not if we're not building and developing an environment where we're creating ideal conditions for people to collaborate, our employees disengage. And that makes your job harder, right? So how do you how do you actually get work done with a disengaged workforce?

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

It's it's, you know, and then they leave and now you got to hire more people. So you're creating more work for yourself because the people don't want to work there because it's not an engaged culture. So that's the higher piece of why we are doing all these things. You know, a culture of continuous improvement is very equivalent to a healthy culture and people are discerning. They don't want to work in toxic environments.

And so if they're not feeling like they can be engaged, they're going to look elsewhere. The good people are going to go away. So, you know, in the big scheme of things, we're creating more work for ourselves as leaders. If we're not focused on creating ideal conditions and if we're not growing our people. Yeah, so that's high, the high pie in the sky. But I haven't I haven't done anything about their daily work yet.

Jamie: [00:27:55] Right, right.

Tracy: [00:27:57] Now. So then sometimes what we talk about is what are you doing? And that's where the leader standard work and the reflection comes in. And it's really important because we then everybody has the same amount of hours in a week, 168 hours in a week. And so what can we remove? What can we delegate? What can? Be dropped. Is this really important to our. All of these things really important to you. Let's do an assessment. Or how do you do it differently? Or how do you hand it off to somebody? And this is very similar to what I do with process improvement.

People always say I have time to do press agreement. I got all this stuff on the calendar. So the first thing we typically work on with them is the stuff that's going to save them time. Yes, I say, okay, I know that your company cares about customers and they care about profits, but we're going to focus on a project that actually saves you time. Yeah, So tell me. And then we walk through a process improvement and. Okay, we just made time for you. So now you have time, right? Well, I do.

Jamie: [00:28:57] And I think this is exactly when you talked about like, well, where are you on your journey in which routine is like, that's exactly how you need to think about is what's going to what's going to make it easier, what's going to save me time, what's going to allow somebody else to take on some of this work. And if you put that routine in place, like think about think about where you're reacting, where if you can get proactive on that, it'll actually be less time, Right?

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

So if you spend an hour every day tracking down whatever and responding and reacting to this thing, well, what is something that can get you on the proactive side of that and cut that down where, yes, you spent 20 minutes every day doing it, but you're only having to react 10 minutes a day now. Right. And that kind of a thing is that's where you focus, right?

Tracy: [00:29:36] Yes, absolutely. So and that's always a challenge. Everybody so busy all the time. But it really is around, you know, how are you making time for your people? And that is probably the biggest challenge we have is, you know, we don't have time to grow our people. We just got to get the work done. And that's when we start having that, you know, the end game is lose lose. Yes.

Jamie: [00:29:57] Yeah. The other thing I really like too, is if okay, so what are the things that you're doing with your people or, you know, I mean, it can be getting the work done right. So. Oh, I'm having, you know, even if it's a daily startup meeting. But we're really just talking about what's the production schedule and who's doing what, whatever it is. But whatever it is that you're doing already.

Tracy: [00:30:15] How.

Jamie: [00:30:15] Can you bring in an element of people development into that? So if you are already doing a status meeting or a scheduled meeting, or if you're already doing some sort of quality assurance activities, whatever it is, how can you you're if you still doing that, But how could you bring in just this little element of people development into this thing you're already doing because that's going to start to pay off. And by the way, you're probably going to be able to have someone else start to do that activity sometimes if you do that, right?

Tracy: [00:30:45] Yes. And watching watching leaders is really interesting to you know, I think being on site we were just talking about before we got on this podcast, how we both are on site at organizations right now. We love it. It's it is different. I mean, what I love is I love observing leaders and in their in their environment. So I you know, I see leaders doing huddle meetings.

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

I see leaders engaging in people. I see how often they're directing versus asking. I see and hear the kinds of questions they're asking. And, you know, becoming a using humble inquiry is difficult and hard if people aren't used to it. And it's just, you know, adding one more question that could be better next time and helping them become better at those questions because, you know, like you said, status meetings sometimes our I hear a lot of one way dialog and they're like well that that that that felt uncomfortable and I had to do all the talking about that.

Well, yeah. So I agree with you. Asking good questions is a great way to start to change how you operate and your behaviors. And if people aren't good at it, guess what? Lousy questions are usually what happens first. Yes. You don't really ask good questions at first. It's an art and and it helps you get better at it as you do more of it. And sometimes we just don't ask good questions. Say, well, have you thought of this right, that you just told them what the solution was? Right.

What else could we do differently? What do you what are you going to try differently next time? You know, different questions and and then the Aha goes on like, you know, the aha moment. They're like, oh, that question works a lot better. So anyway, yes.

Jamie: [00:32:35] Yeah, I love that. And recognizing like you're not going to get better at asking questions by not asking them, you think. But you know, studying more is not going to get you there. You got to go out and just and try it and reflect.

Tracy: [00:32:47] Uh huh. Yeah. Yeah.

Jamie: [00:32:49] Okay. Well, awesome. Well, Tracy, we're going to start to wrap up. So I guess first, I know you have a podcast, so where where should folks listen to you? And then we'll wrap up with our last question.

Tracy: [00:32:59] Okay, great. So, yes, I have a podcast and you've been on it. I have.

Jamie: [00:33:06] Yes. We're going to have to.

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

Tracy: [00:33:07] Link that in the show notes. Yeah. You've been on our podcast and it's called the Just In Time Cafe Podcast. You can go to Pod B and or Stitcher or any of the other ones that are out there. There are listed on all of them. We do a podcast once a month because that's the bandwidth we have. I know some people do, you know, four times a month and we're like once a month and we love it and enjoy it and we're still doing it. We just had our last podcast, our our next podcast for 2023. Our first interview is going to be Karen Martin. So I'm looking forward to interviewing her.

Jamie: [00:33:40] Awesome. Yeah, great. So then as we wrap up, then, what words of encouragement or advice would you leave our listeners with today?

Tracy: [00:33:48] I would say don't be too hard on yourself. Oh, so falling off the bandwagon, falling off that wagon for routines. It's going to happen just like a workout routine. We all know we should work out. We all know we should stay healthy and do things that keep us healthy in terms of fitness. And, you know, we probably try everything. Peloton, go to the gym, Zumba, yoga, pickleball.

And you know what? Sometimes you just got to you stop for a month and you're like, Oh, man, I got to get back to that and then just go back to it, get back on the saddle and just start working on those routines again. Don't feel like you failed. If you if you feel like that didn't work and I failed and you don't ever try it again, then then you know you're not going to move forward on the journey as quickly as you know, you won't be on the journey. And to help develop those skills.

So that's what I would say is I think sometimes people that didn't work and they're really hard on themselves and they're like, you know, forget it.

Jamie: [00:34:48] Yes, I think that's the thing. Oh, that didn't work. Let's quit. Like instead of saying, Oh, you know what? That didn't work the way I thought it was going to let me get back on and keep trying.

Tracy: [00:34:57] Yes.

Jamie: [00:34:59] So awesome. What great advice and encouragement. I love it. Tracy, thank you so much for joining in today.

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

Tracy: [00:35:05] Well, thank you for inviting me, Jamie. And I can't wait to see you in person someday soon.

Jamie: [00:35:10] Yes.

Jamie: [00:35:15] Engaging with Tracey really lights me up and keeps me focused on the positive. So I hope you felt that same level of energy from her. Now, Tracy talked us through a lot of different ideas about the power of leader routines and tips on being successful. And we wanted to leave you with some action steps that you can take in Leader standard work to help make work easier and better so that collectively you create more value. All right. So here are some steps thinking about your next steps.

Number one, consider your team's culture. Write down how you think it is and then how you think you'd like it to be. You might look at recent surveys or interview team members and really listen. Make objective observations to try and understand culture. As you think about the culture that you'd like to move toward. Identify 1 to 3 behaviors that you might add.

And when I say you, I mean you yourself as a leader, not things you want your people or your team to do, but you. What are one, two, three behaviors that you might add and do to help move the culture in the direction you're seeking? Then brainstorm and make a list of 1 to 3 current activities that you do that you could either remove, streamline or delegate.

Jamie: [00:36:38] And then once you have these lists get started, think about what you want to change, what you want to remove, what you want to delegate, but also what do you want to add? And think about what's most important to do and then work on making it a routine. It may not stick or be quite right immediately. Just keep working at it. It is worth it. And remember what Tracy and I said, don't try to tackle too much at once.

Now, if you want to learn more about Leader standard work, head over to our show notes at processplusresults.com. Forward slash Podcast. Then I want you to find episode number 110 and go to those show notes. There you're going to find links to all of our previous episodes about Leader standard work

Improving Your Leadership through Lean Leader Standard Work with Tracy O'Rourke | 110

so you can really dive into this topic. And be sure to mark your calendars and tune in two weeks from now in our next episode as we continue this topic with Paul Dunlop. Until next time.