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Hello friends and colleagues,

I hate that I can't be with you today to talk about the potential of fundamentally changing the direction of our industry.

At R-Anell I have struggled for some time with the feeling that there was something that we were failing at; maybe some fundamental shortcoming that I might be missing. Then, one day when I was having a conversation with my brother who is a builder of R-Anell products, it hit me. I am the problem! My paradigms are preventing me from addressing the issue. And do you know what? I have successfully transferred my paradigms to everyone at R-Anell over the years.

Now, like me, everybody around me believes "stuff" happens. (Another "S" word might work here other than "stuff".)

Well, I got to looking around. And do you know what I found? The entire industry believes it. We all seem to believe "stuff" happens. A few bad miters in the molding, an occasional plumbing leak, some shingles not nailed properly, etc. etc. Hey, that stuff just happens right?

Well why is it OK for those things to happen to us? I don't want the Doctor to feel that way; I sure don't want the airline industry to accept those thoughts. The automotive industry, the people that make our cell phones and computers and about everything else we use don't seem to have that paradigm.

So I started talking to people in other industries about it. I found them to be amazed at how we view things. Now, just because I am starting to get the idea that Lean is the way to go doesn't get everyone else at R-Anell on the bandwagon. It is a hell of a lot easier to say it than to do it. It is viewed by the experts as a multi year process to get the cultural change to begin to take hold.

I'm not sure I am going to be able to do it that fast. Some of the biggest challenges are in the areas that I and the other Senior Managers have to change before others will. There is a pretty big and really fundamental education for us. We have to delegate, delegate and delegate some more. In order to do that we have to train, empower and set goals, boundaries and strategies. We need, and now have, a common Vision that everyone is well informed of and that all buy into. I am studying Lean, pursuing it, reading books about it and anything else that I think might help and I still find myself reverting back to my old ways all too often.

But it is not without its rewarding moments either. I was listening to a presentation that was being put on by a group of workers in the plant after one our Lean events. As I listened to them I realized that this was "their" event. The way they viewed it, they had done it. It was theirs and while they were proud to show it to us there was no question in my mind that they saw themselves as the real owners. They did a good job with the event but I might one day forget just what it was they did. I will never forget the pride, the satisfaction and the ownership they displayed that day.

Do you know something else? If we all get on board with Lean we will change the way the industry does business forever. We will dramatically reduce the cost of building our houses and with that our competitive position in the marketplace. Lean affects how fast we can react to change when needed. It dramatically reduces the surprises that we experience because we don't have a completely predictable business model. It will reduce the surprises that our customers experience as well and when we reduce their surprises we will improve their satisfaction level to a point we would never be able to achieve otherwise.

In most other manufacturing businesses they measure how many defects they have per thousand units produced. We might pat ourselves on the back if we produce one unit with less than a thousand defects.

At the end of the day we can't keep doing what we are doing the same way that we are doing it today. Now I don't know if Lean Production is the only way to get there. What I do know is that virtually every one of the greatest companies in the world think that it is and they are all doing it. If it is good enough for them it is good enough for me.

But boy is it hard and boy does it take a huge commitment.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the "D" and "e" being particularly prominent.

Dennis Jones