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## Bend the Curve CIP-News - April, 2011

Bend the Curve Continuous Improvement Practitioners

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## The 5th Why



*"I am looking for a lot of men who have an infinite capacity to not know what can't be done." - Henry Ford*

We have all heard and read about the *5 Whys* and how important they are in Lean thinking.

In case you've forgotten, the *5 Whys* is a technique to get to the root cause of a problem as quickly as possible.

The idea is that by the time you get to the 5<sup>th</sup> *Why* you have a pretty good idea of what the root cause of a problem is, and you probably do not have to look further for a cause.

It is a great tool and pretty basic in Lean methodology.

If you have ever had young children, you certainly have experienced the *5 Why* phenomena. It is interesting to note that we as humans seem to have a built in gene for the *5 Whys* which gets quickly expressed when we are around 2 or 3 years old and then, more often than not, it disappears

— *Walter E. Lowell*

until rediscovered in later years — quite possibly as a Lean practitioner.

I would encourage you to apply the *5 Whys* as to why this happens, and perhaps at some future Clinical session, we can compare notes.

Be that as it may, the *5 Whys*, in conjunction with other Lean tools, is a powerful way to practice continuous improvement. According to the literature, it is a tool made famous by Toyota and used effectively throughout their company.

What is important though is getting to the 5<sup>th</sup> *Why* because by that time you have identified and eliminated all other possible causes of the problem.

There is a caveat though.

Sometimes it is not uncommon - at least in government work - to get to the 5<sup>th</sup> *Why* and hear something like the following:

"Because they won't let us do it" — or — *Continued on page 5*

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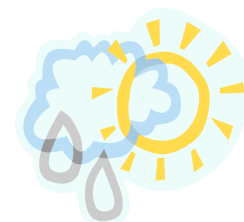
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### Special points of interest:

- Next Clinicals
  - > May 13
  - > June 17
  - > July 15





# Harvard University Recognizes State of Maine *Bend the Curve* as a Bright Idea in Government

**March 29, 2011:** The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, has announced its recognition of the innovative State of Maine *Bend the Curve* program as a Bright Idea award recipient.

"Government is struggling to deliver quality services with strapped resources and diminishing budgets," said Anthony Saich, director of the Ash Center. "These 36 government programs demonstrate that creative solutions to some of our nation's most intractable problems can be generated and succeed in even in the most challenging of environments."

**Maine's *Bend the Curve* program has demonstrated that Lean methods and principles work in government, are enthusiastically embraced by employees, and offer a unique and innovative opportunity to transform government.**

**About Bend the Curve:** In 2004, facing increasing service demands and decreasing resources, two major Maine State departments, Labor and Health and Human Services, initiated Maine's innovative *Bend the Curve* (BTC) program in order to achieve greater governmental efficiencies and effectiveness. Led by Arthur Davis and Dr. Walter Lowell, their goal was to streamline and transform how work is done in government through:

- Ongoing development of internal, inter-departmental continuous improvement capacity, building a team of "volunteer" Continuous Improvement Practitioners (CI-Ps) trained in Lean system/process improvement principles and methods.
- Understanding that the ability to improve work is based on cross-functionality and leadership's commitment to learning and practicing Lean continuous improvement concepts.

## **Streamlining Government Demands Change**

*Bend the Curve* strives to streamline government operations to meet the demand for quality and timely services without a corresponding increase in financial and other resources. This Lean approach is "bending the curve" of the cost of business by improving government processes and changing the fundamental nature of how it does its work. This continuous improvement approach to service delivery will result in effective, efficient and high quality standardized services that are based on accountability and are valued by Maine citizens.

Streamlining government, in a disciplined continuous improvement way, demands changes in government practice including --

- Leadership from the top to drive change and sustain improvements throughout State government.
- An integrated, standardized approach to improving government work, from all involved with and/or benefiting from the work, regardless of "ownership".
- A respected, problem-solving, critical-thinking workforce at all levels.
- Government/service-oriented improvement approaches, methods, and tools, making them accessible and easy to use for all staff.

**Results:** The *Bend the Curve* CI-Ps have completed over 70 Lean interventions involving over 700 employees. These improved performance in diverse areas such as —

- Day Care Program (\$700,000 saved).
- Vital Statistics (process time reduced from 90 to 5 days).
- Job Order (5 FTEs saved).
- Utilization Review (50% reduction in process time).
- Governor's Training Initiative (70% reduction in cost).
- State's Health, Environmental and Testing Laboratory (HETL): trained Senior Management team in Lean and applied VSM and Kaizen in all HETL's labs -- reducing waste, improving process time by 30%, and improving customer satisfaction.

#### ***Bend the Curve streamlines government by –***

- Providing continuous improvement consultation and mentoring to work teams and leadership.
- Implementing *Bend the Curve* & Lean continuous improvement concepts, methods, and tools, including:
  - ★ Meeting customer value expectations.
  - ★ Involving the people who know the work in planning and decision-making.
  - ★ Identifying and analyzing work systems/ processes and problems needing improvement.
  - ★ Developing problem-solving skills in the workforce to enable them to continuously improve services.
  - ★ Assisting teams in streamlining work flow.
- Identifying opportunities to reduce service delivery time, improve quality, and lower costs.

**BTC website:** <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/btc>



\* Bright Ideas is an initiative that recognizes creative and promising government Programs and partnerships. The initiative is offered through the Innovations in Government Program, a program of the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard Kennedy School. For more information, please visit <http://innovationsaward.harvard.edu/BrightIdeas.cfm>.

# The 5th Why

(cont'd from p. 1)

"Because we have no control over that, so there is nothing we can do."

Have you ever heard these or something similar before?

This is what I call hitting the 5<sup>th</sup> Why wall !

It is the not so screeching sound of continuous process improvement grinding to an abrupt halt.

Or is it?

And if not, what does a Continuous Improvement Practitioner do at this point in the conversation?

It is a particularly pernicious point they are making, and one needs to be careful in responding since agreement basically means giving in to a sense of hopelessness, helplessness, and defeat.

Which is one point I think Ford was trying to make in the above quote.

That is, a place that all too often exists in the culture of government: "Geez, there is nothing we can do, because it's up to the < \_\_\_\_\_ (read legislature, department, boss, etc,) and they won't do it".

This sentiment is basically 'it is beyond our control'.

What are we saying when we deny the possibility of change, when change is all around us everyday?

Think for a minute: WWTD? (What would Toyota do?)

Since 70% of the parts in their cars are made by someone else somewhere else, how could they possibly become a world leader in their industry with 'not possible' as the answer to the 5<sup>th</sup> Why?

The news today is saying that Toyota's parts production capacity is going to be reduced because of the earthquakes and tsunami that have hit Japan, thus severely impacting Toyota's overall growth.

Do you suppose Toyota is responding to this challenge by saying it's nature and there is nothing they can do but accept it?

I think not! And you can bet they have been busy developing a plan to solve this problem.

Shigeo Shingo once cautioned about the National League of 'Because'.

So how do we avoid becoming members of this league?

Shingo's brilliance was to say simply that solving problems is not due to the lack of resources but rather lack of

**RESOURCEFULNESS!**

It is when hitting the wall at the 5<sup>th</sup> Why where "it can't be done because" resides that we must turn to Shingo's advice and insist:

"What CAN be done and when can we do it !?!"

(cont'd on next page)

## The 5th Why (cont'd from p. 4)

Breaking this wall down clears the way for us to move forward, however slowly, however incrementally and, more importantly, begins to change the way we look at problems and how we address them.

As Henry Ford so presciently said,  
"Whether you think that you can, or that you can't, you are usually right."

— *Walter*

## 2011 Lean Systems Summit

Don't forget that the 2011 Lean Summit is being held Friday, August 12th in Portland at the Eastland Park Hotel (8AM-5PM).

Pre-Summit events (TBA) are being developed for the day before, Thursday, August 11th (8AM-5PM).

The evening of the 11th, there will also be an informal networking get-together at the Top of the East in the hotel.

Updated information on the Summit will be available at <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/btc/events.html>

## BTC Lean Events

Date	Time	Topic	Location	Contact
<b>May 13</b>	8:15-4:30	Clinical Supervision	221 State, Lean Lab	WEL/ASD
<b>June 6-10</b>	8:15-5:00	DOP 1-6 ( <i>USM/LAC</i> )	Lewiston-Auburn College	WL/AD/JR/JK/MD
<b>June 17</b>	8:15-4:30	Clinical Supervision	221 State, Lean Lab	WEL/ASD
<b>July 15</b>	8:15-4:30	Clinical Supervision	221 State, Lean Lab	WEL/ASD
<b>Aug 11-12</b>	8:00-5:00	2011 Lean Summit	Portland, Eastland Park	WEL/JK
<b>August 19</b>	8:15-4:30	Clinical Supervision	221 State, Lean Lab	WEL/ASD
<b>Sept. 16</b>	8:15-4:30	Clinical Supervision	221 State, Lean Lab	WEL/ASD
<b>Sept 19-23</b>	8:15-5:00	DOP 1-7 ( <i>tentative</i> )	221 State, Lean Lab	WL/AD/JR/JK/MD
<b>Oct. 21</b>	8:15-4:30	Clinical Supervision	221 State, Lean Lab	WEL/ASD
<b>Nov. 18</b>	8:15-4:30	Clinical Supervision	221 State, Lean Lab	WEL/ASD
<b>Dec. 5-9</b>	8:15-5:00	DOP 2-3 ( <i>tentative</i> )	221 State, Lean Lab	WL/AD/JR/JK/MD
<b>Dec. 16</b>	8:15-4:30	Clinical Supervision	221 State, Lean Lab	WEL/ASD

\* To add or see more events or detail, go to the Bend the Curve Calendar in Outlook's Public Folders.





# Department of Health and Human Services

Maine People Living  
Safe, Healthy and Productive Lives

Paul R. LePage, Governor

Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner

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The primary purpose of the *Bend the Curve* Team is to provide support, consultation, assistance, and leadership in continuous improvement approaches and activities for State staff, work teams, and leaders as they seek to continually improve their work culture, systems, processes, and environments – in order to meet the mission of Maine State government and the expectations of Maine citizens.

We're on the net !

<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/btc>

**Bend**  
the Curve

## Continuous Improvement Practitioners: BTC Intervention Facilitation Status

DHHS		DOL		DAFS	
Kate D. Carnes	C-L	Jorge A. Acero	I-O	Wendy Christian	I-O
Nancy Cronin	C-O	Michael T. Brooker	I-O	Rebecca S. Greene	I-L
Marcel Gagne	LCL	Deidre A. Coleman	I-O	Lyndon R. Hamm	I-LCL
Julita Klavins	L	Joan A. Cook	L	Billy J. Ladd	I-LCL
Don Lemieux	C-O	Merle A. Davis	L	Maayan L. Lahti	I-O
Muriel Littlefield	C	Eric Dibner	LCL	Michaela T. Loisel	I-L
Walter E. Lowell	L	Peter D. Diplock	O	Henry B. McIntyre	O
Terrold Melville	LCL	Brenda G. Drummond	I-O	Gloria R. Payne	I-O
Ann O'Brien	L	Anita C. Dunham	I-LCL	DOT	
Cheryl Ring	C-LCL	Karen D. Fraser	I-L	Michael Burns	C-O
Anne Rogerson	O	Timothy J. Griffin	L	Jessica Glidden	I-O
Terry Sandusky	L	Gaetane S. Johnson	I-O	Rick Jeselskis	I-O
Bonnie Tracy	C-O	Michael J. Johnson	O	Robert McFerren	I-O
Sec. of State-BMV		James J. McManus	I-LCL	Sam McKeeman	C-O
Scott Thompson	O	Scott R. Neumeyer	I-O	Jeffrey Naum	I-O
OPEGA, Legislature		Bruce H. Prindall	I-L	Mark S. Tolman	I-O
Matthew K. Kruk	I-O	John L. Rioux	L	DEP	
Univ. of Maine		Sheryl J. Smith	C	Carmel A. Rubin	I-O
Kim Jenkins	O				
Community — Private Sector *					
Rae-Ann Brann*	I-L	Jane French*	I-L	Alicia Kellogg*	I-O
Stephen C. Crate*	I-O	James Fussell*	I-L	Jack Nicholas*	I-O
Arthur S. Davis*	L	Kelly Grenier*	LCL	Clough Toppan*	C-L
Nancy Desisto*	L	Town of Durham, New Hampshire			
		David Kurz	I-O	Steve McCusker	I-O
		Michael Lynch	I-O	Todd Selig	O
* Community CI-P					
I - Inactive		C - "Champion for Lean" - not facilitating			
L - Lead		LCL - Learning Co-Lead		O - Learning Observer	

## More Miller workshops & DOP 1 being planned !

Additional workshops with Ken Miller are being planned. We'll keep you posted.

The introductory week-long CI-P Bronze level training DOP 1-6 & 1-7 are being planned for June & September. More info will be forthcoming.

You can also check the Bend the Curve Calendar in Outlook's Public Folders & come to the planning meetings for Clinicals and other