

LEAN – Strategy or Tactic?

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Industry Partners Australia National Conference
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Unilever



LEAN: Tactic or Strategy

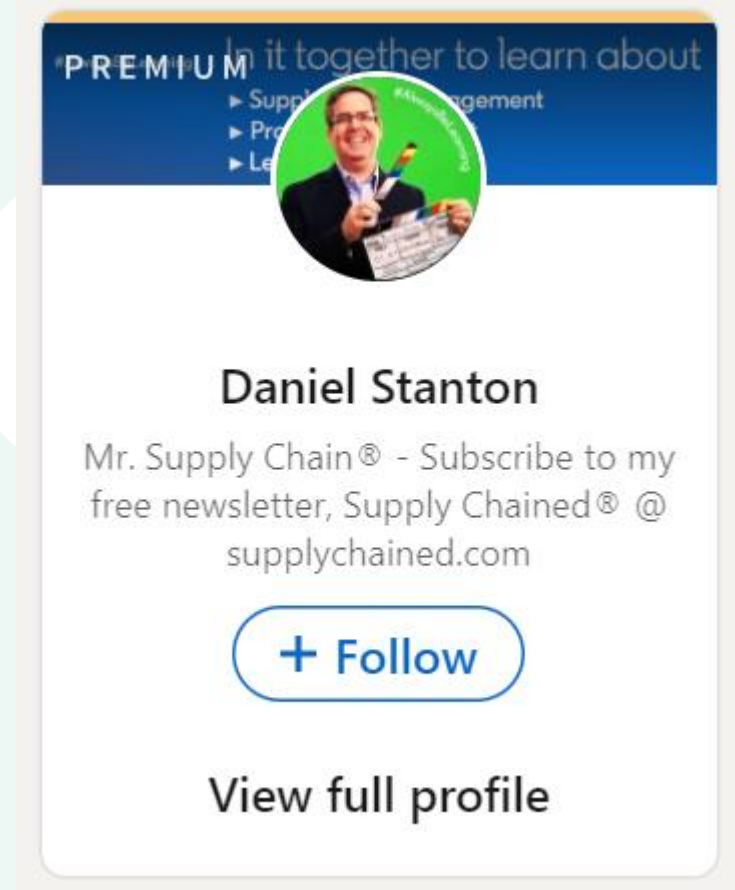
Daniel Stanton aka “Mr. Supply Chain” decided to bring a debate between Supply Chain colleagues to LinkedIn – is LEAN a tactic or strategy?

This question ignited an interesting and at times impassioned debate

Is LEAN a tactic or strategy?

Is there an impact on Lean deployment within your organization?

Does it matter?



Quick Frame up before we kick off.....

Strategy

defines your long-term goals and how you're planning to achieve them. In other words, your strategy gives you the path you need toward achieving your organization's vision, mission and goals.

Tactics

are much more concrete and are often oriented toward smaller steps and a shorter time frame along the way. They involve best practices, specific plans, resources, etc. They're also called "initiatives." What actions need to be taken.

[Strategy Vs. Tactics: The Main Difference & How to Track Progress Of Both - ClearPoint Strategy](#)

Let's take it to the people.....



Daniel Stanton • 2nd

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2yr • Edited •

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IS LEAN A STRATEGY?

This week, two of my [#SupplyChain](#) colleagues got into a debate.

[Sean Driscoll](#) and [Jason Morin](#) are both very knowledgeable about process improvement and quality management.

And they are both advocates for [#Lean](#).

But they disagree about whether Lean is a strategy, or a tactic.

We're going to dig into this deeper...

But I'm really curious about what other people think!

Please share your opinion in the survey link, and feel free to elaborate in the comments below...

**Discuss amongst your
table – Is Lean a strategy
or tactic? And why?**

**5 minutes group
discussion.**

**2 minutes share your
summary.**

#LeanIsAStrategy vs #LeanIsNotAStrategy

#LeanIsAStrategy vs #LeanIsNotAStrategy

Is LEAN a strategy?

The author can see how you vote. [Learn more](#)

Yes! #LeanIsAStrategy

61%

#LeanIsAStrategy vs #LeanIsNotAStrategy

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Yes! #LeanIsAStrategy

61%

No! #LeanIsNotAStrategy

35%

What is Lean?

5%

1,378 votes • Poll closed

What did the Strategists say?



Chris Fish • 3rd+

2y (edited) ...

Solution Delivery Manager | Senior Project Manager | Scrum Master | Fi...

Lean is a strategy. Implemented correctly it's becomes part of an organisations DNA. Implementation done badly, and it becomes a short term tactic.

Like · 1 | Reply · 1 Reply

What did the Strategists say?



Chris Fish • 3rd+

2y (edited) ...

Solution Delivery Manager | Senior Project Manager | Scrum Master | Fi...

Lean is a strategy. Implemented correctly it's becomes part of an
organizational DNA. It's not a tool, it's a mindset. It's not a short
term fix, it's a long term commitment.

Like...



DJ Duarte • 2nd

2y ...

Global Optimization Expert & Lean Leadership Coach at Makoto Flow, L...

The failure of LEAN (not TPS) within industry today is largely due to the inability of leaders to elevate and drive lean as a Strategy. Yes a STRATEGY. Obviously, every strategy has a tactical approach of some kind to ensure execution and deliver of outcomes. So, in some ways I

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kind



Patrick J. Meehan • 3rd+

2y ...

C-SUITE EXEC w/CPG EXPERIENCE ★ Elevating culture, profit, productivi...

Strategy, dare I say, it should be part of your culture?

Like · 2 | Reply · 1 Reply

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STR
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Patrick J. Meehan • 3rd+

2y ...

C-SUITE EXEC w/CPG EXPERIENCE ★ Elevating culture, profit, productivi...

Strate

Like



Everet Bluth • 3rd+

2y ...

Business suffers when people and business strategies are not in sync. Y...

I voted strategy because you have to start with that. But, isn't it a little
of both?

Like · 👍 1 | Reply · 1 Reply

What did the Tacticians say?



Paul Sacco (He/Him) • 3rd+
Creative & Critical Thinking Strategist

2y ...

Lean is tactical rather than strategic. Strategy is a unique means of gaining a competitive advantage. Strategy begins with a goal which results in an advantageous business model. Lean is a way of working so it is tactical and not unique.

Like ·  8 | Reply · 12 Replies

What did the Tacticians say?



Paul Sacco (He/Him) • 3rd+

Creative & Critical Thinking Strategist

2y ...

Lean is tactical rather than strategic. Strategy is a unique means of

gaining
results
so it

Like



Manik Sood • 2nd

Improving something is always on my mind

2y ...

According to Micheal Porter, Strategy is about being different. Strategy is the "what" part of the business and helps answering the question, "What are we trying to accomplish?" There can be 3 different strategies 1. Cost leadership 2. Differentiation 3. Focus.

Tactics is the "how" part of the equation. It answers how is organisation going to achieve its goal.

Therefore, it will be wrong to say Lean a strategy. It will always come in tactic.

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Daniel Stanton (He/Him) **Author**

2y ...

Mr. Supply Chain® - Subscribe to my free newsletter, Supply C...

[Manik](#), I need to go back and review my [Michael Porter](#), but if memory serves his argument was that there are two approaches to strategy: 1) doing something that others can't, or 2) doing the same thing as others, but doing it cheaper. If so, then definition 2 sounds a lot like "Be Lean" is a legit strategy.

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Ken Eakin • 2nd

Author, Lean Coach, Consultant, Facilitator, Teacher, Speaker, N...

2y ...

[Daniel Stanton](#) and [Manik Sood](#), Michael Porter bankrupted his own firm (Monitor) and had some dubious contracts with North African dictators. so I would not put too much faith in his utterances on strategy. [Steve Denning](#) pointed out in his book The Age of Agile that strategy is not a fixed market position

And we also had.....



Daisy McCarty • 2nd

2y ...

Chief Inventor at The Marketing Blender Lab ★ Brand Messaging Expert...

I would say it's a methodology.

Like ·  2 | Reply

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Daniel Gardner • 2nd

Co-founder of tech-enabled freight forwarder & customs broker, SME i...

2y ...

Lean is both a philosophy and a methodology.

Like ·  5 | Reply · 2 Replies

And we also had.....

**Was there a option for
"None of the above"?**



Daisy McCarty • 2nd

Chief Inventor at The Marketing Blender Lab ★ Brand Messaging Expert...

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Like · 🗨️ 2 | Reply



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**Was there a option for
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Jason Morin • 2nd

2y (edited) ...

Where Lean Thinking Intersects With World-Class Fulfillment &...

The word "Lean" isn't really the ideal word but hindsight is 20/20 and given what was known about Toyota at the time The Machine That Changed The World was written, it seemed appropriate. Per Womack/Jones/Roos, "Lean production uses less of everything compared with mass production..." (pg. 13). The other challenge is developing English words that encapsulate the principles and thinking of Toyota...in some cases there isn't even a Japanese word. Mike Rother's "Toyota Kata" attempts to describe the deliberate coaching and problem-solving routines embedded within Toyota, but for

**Hey Guys!
I read a book**

And we also had.....



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2y ...

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**Hey Guys!
I read a book**



Endi Kustamsi • 2nd

2y ...

Total Flow Kaizen

I found it very useful. Thanks.



**Hey Guys!
I bought a book!**

And there was also some insight.....



Chris Turner • 2nd

2y (edited) ••

S&OP, IBP, SCM, ERP, PLM... WTF!? Forget the acronyms | Helping com...

[Daniel](#), great provocation, thanks!

Short Answer: IT DEPENDS!

More Interesting Question: DEPENDS ON WHAT?

IT DEPENDS!

The richness, and diversity, of comments gives an insight into how difficult it is to grapple with these ideas, and how much hinges on the definitions and mental models we use.

**Discuss amongst your
table – Lean a strategy or
tactic depends on What?
How may this impact an
Organization?**

**10 minutes group
discussion.**

**2 minutes share your
summary.**

LEAN: Tactic or Strategy

In any Lean implementation, the first question leadership needs to answer is "What are we trying to accomplish?"

Organizational Strategy works in connecting and aligning, choices and actions to progress objectives in support of the organizations vision, mission & goals.

Lean as a Strategy plays an integral role connecting Context, Purpose, Culture and Outcomes for the organization.

Strategies require supporting and aligned tactics

Changing strategy can be like turning a Supertanker



Rick Bohan, Lean Manufacturing Strategist

Helping manufacturers improve throughput, customer service, and cash flow by creating lean processes.

If I approach an Operator and ask what the shadow board next to her is for? "I dunno. They put it there and told us to use it," I immediately know that Lean is being implemented as tactics and probably won't be successful.

On the other hand, if the Operator says, "That shadow board is where I keep my tools. I designed it and I decided its location. When I don't have to look for tools, die changes don't take as long. When die changes don't take as long, the schedule is more consistent. This improves our costs and we're able to respond to customer orders more quickly. That's why our market share and revenues have gone up recently." Yeah, anybody can put up a shadow board. But there are lots of empty shadow boards around. That's because lean was implemented as "tactics" in those plants rather than as "strategy"

THANK

YOU!