

CRAFTSMAN'S CRIBSHEET

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5 Keys to Being a Positive and Effective Team Lead

Many people worry about the differences between being a leader and being a manager. Here are my thoughts on the five keys necessary for being a positive and effective team lead.

- 1. They must be committed to continuous improvement.** This means correcting, revising, adapting and improving themselves, the people and processes under their authority, as well as the policies and expectations of their management. They are thoughtful and communicate effectively in all directions.
- 2. Their approach to problem solving is informed by the human performance system.** They look at the entire system of product realization. They are not just looking for scapegoats to blame.
- 3. They accept that they are responsible for their team's production.** If they do not accept this responsibility, they are merely a critic. The enlightened team lead knows that their job is to constantly adjust and put the right pieces together to make a coherent whole. This means training, communicating and advocating for their performers. Investing in their performers with training and coaching is an investment in the team.
- 4. They are the one person who is always thinking.** They are thinking of how to better understand the potential of what the shop already has and how else to use it to increase capability, capacity and quality. "What can we do, with what we already have, to maximize our output?" is a thoughtful and an important question. Harvesting increased value from capacity on hand is pure value added. This is called bricolage, and the one who does this is a bricoleur.
- 5. They are slow to change their mind until given facts and data.** They are not easily intimidated by the powers that be, nor by the tyranny of the



urgent. They are immune to the gossip and petty politics that can derail others. An effective lead or supervisor is never in a hurry, yet frighteningly effective at his or her own pace. Theirs is the way of respect.

Bonus trait: Anticipation. The very best folks in manufacturing anticipate, and so they and their team are prepared when the unexpected arrives. I'll take a class "C" anticipator over a class "A" reactor any day.

At the end of the shift, either the earned hours were achieved or they were not. Either the parts met the specification or they did not. Our organizations hold the team lead accountable for that performance. The team lead knows that the performance was actually of his team, and he was the means to achieve the results through them. It is a false choice to say that the team lead should be more of a leader or a manager. The best team leads are trainers, coaches, active listeners, perpetual learners, thinkers, bricoleurs and agents of change.

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