

Don't Mistake Movement for Advancement

Advancement is essential for a sustainable and viable shop. Make sure your shop is advancing and not just moving.



There is a lot of movement in a shop: bars are feeding, workpieces are turning and parts are dropping. That's exactly what we want for our machines. But what about our strategic plan for our employees? Is movement what we want? Or do we want advancement?

I love strategic planning. I love working with others to determine a goal and plan so everyone can work together to achieve a positive result. But here is the thing about strategic planning ... you can make a long list of tasks that will make everyone look busy, but the question that needs to be asked is "will that task advance my plan?" The same question can be applied to day-to-day activities. Are the tasks done by employees just movement or will that task advance the shop?

Like many of you, I grew up in a family-owned business. Small businesses usually have employees performing many different tasks — wearing "several hats." I have mostly worked in businesses with 70 people or less and the biggest takeaway is that efficiency is key. To be able to do what needs to be done in the required time frame means that we have to work smarter. Which means we need to recognize the difference between movement and advancement.

Movement Versus Advancement

I'll give you a simplified example of movement versus advancement. The janitor is very busy mopping the floor. Lots of movement — head is down and the mop is flying back and forth. Looks very busy and anyone could attest the janitor is working very hard. But it has been five minutes and the janitor is still in the same spot. For the task to be effective, the janitor needs to advance forward to cover the whole floor. The janitor is moving, but not advancing.

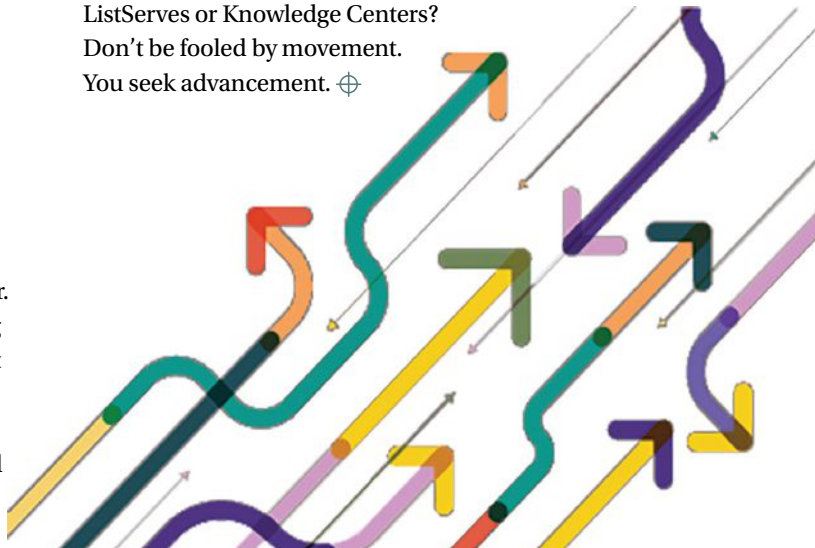
Think of your shop. In the big picture, is your strategic plan a lot of tasks that will make it look like something is being done or are they steps that will actually advance your business? Are you buying a new machine to grow

the business or to make the business look bigger? Are you adding capabilities that will advance production and quality or do you just want to be able to say that you added the capability?

Wasted Movement

To move without advancing is wasted movement. My mother was a brilliant businesswoman and when she saw wasted movement she would say "they are rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic."

Sometimes movement feels great! "Look ... I'm doing something!" But that can be a short-lived high if it doesn't advance the business. Watch your employees in the office and on the floor. Is what they are doing advancing the task? Do 30 sales phone calls get a new job or two in-person visits? Is there a process which requires more paperwork/walking/effort than is necessary? Does a foreman spend hours trying to find a credible solution or use the PMPA ListServes or Knowledge Centers? Don't be fooled by movement. You seek advancement. ⊕



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