Cascading Lean: Longitudinal, Multi-level Study of Work Values and Lean-team Performance

Study objective: As more-and-more organizational units adopt the Lean philosophy, their members have to subscribe to continuous process improvement-type values and share their ideas for reducing waste and increasing customer-orientation. Unfortunately, many Lean initiatives fail and leadership is often seen as the main cause. Even though Lean leaders' values have been explored, we know little about their multi-level congruence with both organizational and other team member values, as well as their relation to sustained Lean-team performance. We answer, therefore, the question: *How are Lean organizational values aligned with and transmitted via Lean (team) leaders to their teams and, once aligned, do they lead to sustained Lean-team performance over time?*

Methodology: This exploratory, abductive study examined five Dutch high-performing Lean work teams from five organizations. We studied over two years: 1) *documents* stating official organizational values; 2) a *survey* of all the team leaders and members, at two points in time, following Brown and Treviño's (2009) work values clusters; 3) informal interviews with team leaders, members and HR officers during our two one-week *site visits* per team; and 4) *archival objective team performance data*, including sickness absence and output quality.

Findings: The organizational, team leaders' and members' values constellations were relatively stable. Both team leaders and their members ranked their self-transcendence and openness-to-change values as most dominant. The teams that had aligned their values well, performed best over time.

Discussion: Propositions are presented which argue that Lean teams thrive on value alignment and values cascading among the examined actors herein.

Keywords (max 5): Lean Management; Leadership; Work Values Cascading; Team Performance; Longitudinal

Please select the topic(s) from the list that **best suit** your submission. This is to assist with the review process and the creation of the conference program itself.

Required, maximum number of topics to select: 3

1) Organizational values
2) Leadership
3) Work values