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### **Know the process**

If you don't know your process you're in a pile of trouble.

I mean every detail of it. Not what you think happens but rather what actually happens day and night, 24/7/52!

At this particular time when our factories should be as LEAN as never before, my walks-about around factories and offices clearly tells me there is a dearth of simple process control. Management justifies the purchase of technology but workers dictate its usage. That's costing your company an arm and a leg so to speak.

Now, before the year is totally exhausted, go find a vital process, one that your customers depend on. This may be in admin or factory but you'll be shocked to learn just how many of your staff is honestly trying to do their job but squander time and effort, not through deliberate wastage or bad intentions but by using incorrect methods that rob your business of value.

Find a clipboard and pencil (these are the only tools you'll need to save your company a bomb!). Identify the process but keep it simple to start with and follow the steps through in sequence. Write down exactly what you see, not what you thought was going to happen but what actually happened. Even record the waiting time for whatever reason and meetings too.

There are two important measures for you to note and both are concerned with time. Firstly, add up all the 'process times' for the exercise. These are generally activity times spent physically changing the state of the product or service. Such as machining, welding, painting, packing and so on. Then find out the length of time it takes for a single unit to travel all the way through the process under normal operating conditions. This we'll call 'throughput time' and you'll probably run out of time yourself waiting for the product to appear in shipping.

What you'll find is that the process time is far shorter than the throughput time. The difference being time spent in the process adding cost but not adding value. This also tells you of just how much process improvement can be made.

This must create a realization within you so powerful that you'll fall in love with your factory/admin process all over again. It's what Tom Peters (In pursuit of Wow), Jim Collins (Good to Great) and Peter Pande (of Six Sigma fame) called "passion"

Now, more than ever before we need passion in our offices and factories.  
Go well. Go LEAN.