



Put on Your “There Has to Be a Better Way” Glasses: Driving Continuous Improvement in Transportation Management

By Adrian Gonzalez
November 23, 2015

Everybody agrees that driving continuous improvement is important, especially in transportation management, but in many cases, companies are so consumed with their day-to-day activities that it’s difficult for them to find the time for it. How can companies overcome this hurdle?

That was my opening question for Bill Madden, Director of Managed Services at [LeanLogistics](#), in [a recent episode of Talking Logistics](#). First, Bill acknowledged the resource and time constraints many companies face:

It’s a challenge for companies to determine where to spend their discretionary time [beyond doing the day-to-day tasks]. It’s natural for companies to want to spend that time on the bright and shiny strategic work out there, but at the same time, there’s a portion of work on their plate that’s really not so exciting but is required to run the business [more efficiently]. When I challenge logistics executives with “Are you investing the same focus and drive on eliminating waste in your existing processes?” the answer is often no.

Bill’s comment echoed what I wrote a couple of years ago in [Forget Innovation, Just Execute Better](#):

As an industry analyst, my focus is generally on the road ahead, on the what’s next, on the greener grass beyond the fence. It’s “innovate or die,” right? Well, not always. Sometimes it’s “execute or die,” as we see all the time in sports and politics, and yes, in the business world too.

“Continuous improvement has to be embedded in your company’s culture,” Bill added. “The drive has to come from all levels in the organization, starting with leadership setting the expectation for people to respectfully challenge the way things are done today.” He went on to say:

It’s about having a pair of glasses with a lens of looking at things and saying “There has to be a better way to ____” and then filling in that blank. You start by adopting that mindset across the organization. The next piece of the puzzle is

coupling that mindset with clear goals and objectives -- for your own organization or your customer's -- and then generating project ideas tied to achieving those goals.

In this [short video clip](#), Bill shares an example of how a customer was spending 40 man-hours per month on accrual reporting, which was preventing important members of their team from spending more time on strategic initiatives.

By working with the customer to understand why the accrual reporting process was taking so much time and effort and then implementing a solution, the process was reduced from 40 man-hours per month to 10 minutes!

"Improving accrual reporting doesn't sound like earth-shattering innovation," said Bill, "but how would your company benefit from adding the bandwidth of a very seasoned, high performer back into your project team for one additional week per month to tackle those shiny strategic initiatives?"

I encourage you to [watch the rest of my conversation with Bill](#) to gain additional insights and advice on this topic, including [how to identify and prioritize continuous improvement opportunities](#) and how LeanLogistics addressed this challenge presented by one of its employees: "[There has to be a better way to submit and manage ideas for continuous improvement projects.](#)"

In the meantime, if you're thinking of what to get your supply chain and logistics team members for the holidays, perhaps you should consider giving them a pair of "There Has to Be a Better Way" glasses. It's a gift with the potential to keep on giving.

Adrian Gonzalez is trusted advisor and leading industry analyst with more than 17 years of research experience in logistics and supply chain management. He is the founder and president of Adelante SCM, a peer-to-peer learning and networking community for supply chain and logistics executives and young professionals. He is also the founder and host of [Talking Logistics](#), a weekly online video talk show and blog where he leads conversations with thought leaders and newsmakers in the supply chain and logistics industry. Prior to his current roles, Adrian held various leadership positions at ARC Advisory Group, Motorola, Polaroid, and Clare. He is also a member of the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals and a LinkedIn Influencer.

This report was originally published on [Talking Logistics](#) on November 23, 2015.