

A New Kind of Teamwork: Strategic Partnering

Earlier this year I attended the 2012 West Coast Manufacturing Conference in Los Angeles. The theme of the conference was "An Industry in Transition" and much of the conference focused on the need to optimize the supply chain beyond what past optimizations have achieved in terms of costs, quality, and delivery time.

In the keynote speech by Walter Gruenes of Grant Thornton entitled *Five Key Factors for Growth in the Manufacturing Industry*, Gruenes called for manufacturers to "build business intelligence" for strategic discussions between suppliers and prime contractors. He stated that with 85 percent of the world's growth expected to come from outside the United States, As a result, U.S. companies must reduce costs and while maintaining quality to remain competitive in the global market.

This is driving companies from Boeing to Walmart to consider a new kind of partnering, which may mean things like extending advance payments and procurement power to suppliers and subcontractors and finding other ways to reduce overall costs and improve productivity throughout the entire supply chain.

In the breakout session on aerospace and defense Ivan Rosenberg, President of Frontier Associates, Supply Chain Consultants, talked about the importance of suppliers implementing LEAN manufacturing strategies commenting that companies like Boeing are outsourcing quality, meaning suppliers must deliver the highest level of quality in every part while not driving up costs or delivery time.

Mr. Rosenberg went on to say that this isn't always possible, and may require prime companies to partner with suppliers in new and more intimate ways. He noted that most people don't really get it — but you have to "care" about your partner. Alan Baker of the Boeing Corp. C-17 program put it this way, "We [Boeing] need to learn the culture of our suppliers; we need a new definition of teamwork."

A new definition of teamwork is exactly what a colleague and friend of mine, Bill Bellows, from Pratt & Whitney Rocketdyne, have been developing and sharing with people for many years. Bill is an Associate Fellow in the InThinking Network (www.in2in.org) and he provides consulting, facilitation and instruction in the implementation of "better thinking about thinking" and its application to better resource management.

The program is built on the teachings and writings of many great thinkers including Dr. W. Edwards Deming, who is one of the world's leading experts on management philosophy. These programs focus on ideas such as the relationships between internal departments and creating cross-company teams. The ultimate goal is to better understand interdependencies and connections and to find ways to work together rather than separately.

While this is a "new" definition in current business, a hundred years ago Henry Ford saw the wisdom in this process:
"Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success."

At the College of the Canyons Employee Training Institute (ETI), we are always looking at new and innovative opportunities for learning and developing in the workplace. That is why we are partnering with the In2:InThinking Network to bring the *Santa Clarita Valley (SCV) TeamWork Project* to the local business community. Discovery sessions will be free to interested parties with more in-depth programs also available for a fee. More information about this and other workplace learning programs is available by contacting ETI.

John Milburn is the Director of the Employee Training Institute (ETI) at College of the Canyons. For more information about ETI please call (661) 362-3245 or visit http://www.canyonsecondev.org/eti_overview.shtml.