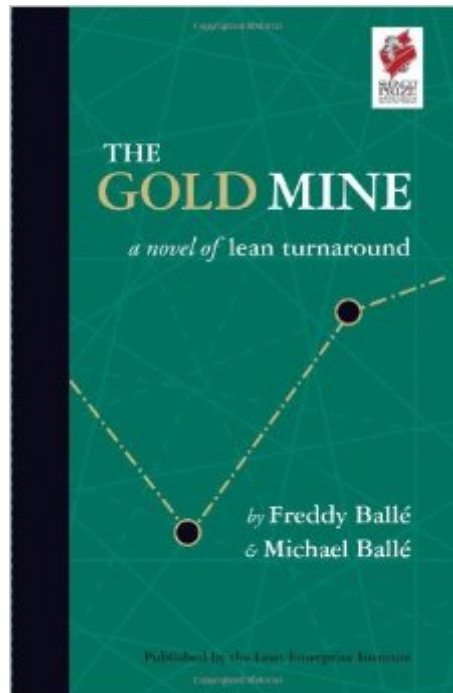


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The Gold Mine: A Novel Of Lean Turnaround



Synopsis

The Gold Mine: a Novel of Lean Turnaround deftly weaves together the technical and human pieces of implementing lean manufacturing in an engaging story that readers will find both compelling and instructive. Authors Freddy and Michael Ball[©] have produced the first integrated and systematic approach to a set of ideas that have maximized value and minimized waste throughout the world. At the heart of the Gold Mine is Bob Woods, a curmudgeonly sensei coaxed out of retirement by his son Mike to help boyhood friend Phil Jenkinson save his struggling company. Despite terrific products and a backlog of orders, Phil's company cannot generate enough cash from its operations to pay its bills. And so Mike enlists Bob to help his pal fix this crisis. "You're trying to deal with your mess as if it was a technical problem," Bob tells Phil. "Move this machine here, change this design there, which it is to some extent, but it's all about people. You have a leadership problem not just a production or business problem." As Phil begins to tackle the key challenges necessary to improve his company's operations, he comes to understand the deeper points of lean. Readers will also draw powerful insights from his journey. The Gold Mine presents all the key lean principles, ranging from well-known ideas such as pull and flow, to lesser-known yet equally important principles such as jidoka and heijunka. The book also reveals lean as a system using a realistic story to show how the principles are interrelated and how they lead to useful tools such as kanban or 5S.

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Customer Reviews

Two Thumbs Up for "The Gold Mine"! This is by far the most insightful tale I have read about what it is like to try and drive lean manufacturing principles in the real world. Most books about Lean/TPS are dry technical "how to" guides that give you a tool and then dogmatically tell to go apply it and drive improvement. Or they are general overview books that describe what lean is, why it is so great, why you need to do it, but then of course give you no clue as to how to do it...(I won't directly offend any authors by mentioning titles this is after all just my opinion). This novel strikes a unique balance that is both insightful and fun to read for those of us interested in lean manufacturing methods (a.k.a. Toyota Production System) or for anyone just interested in a good business story. The book uses a fictional (but very real sounding) plant backdrop and describes the struggle of how a management team embarks upon learning about lean from a reluctant and wise old sensei. It covers how they struggle to implement the methods with some human drama, and eventually how they find a way to make improvements for their respective situation. In fairness I must admit that I am a somewhat biased reviewer. I was fortunate enough early in my life to have lived in Japan for nine and a half years and a great part of this time I worked for Toyota Motor Corporation as a manufacturing engineer in an old engine plant. My boss, my boss's boss, and his boss, etc. were all first hand disciples of Taiichi Ono in the 1960's and 70's (I claim no such lineage I just happened to work there long after Mr. Ohno had left). What I find amazing in this book however is that the teachings are remarkably similar to what my Japanese superiors taught me back in Toyota over 15 years ago.

I read "The Gold Mine" when it came out, and immediately had it added to our company Lean Library, and my own "read again" list. It is definitely a must read for those that want to get into the depths of Lean, not just the tools. To get beyond and behind the mechanics of the tools, I group this book along with the outstanding Harvard Business Review articles: "The DNA of the Toyota Production System" by Spear & Bowen, and "Learning to Lead at Toyota" by Spear. Understanding the mechanics of the Lean tools is necessary but not sufficient. Understanding the power behind the tools and the real challenge implementing them is critical. Tool books and true-life but superficial turnaround stories are helpful, but cannot reach the levels that a fictional story like this can (especially when told by authors who clearly "get it"). Here are specific thoughts on the book itself: On the positives: 1) the descriptions of the dad character's interactions with his sensei's were so realistic, I could picture myself with my own sensei's years ago (Hiyashi-san and Oba-san from Toyota and Matsubara-san from Tokai Rika). I found myself learning as much from remembering and rethinking what they said as I did from the book itself. 2) I was thoroughly impressed with the

depth of understanding of Lean conveyed by the Balle's. The dad character hits on some real subtleties of Lean that it took me years of doing to even appreciate the power. I encourage readers to go over the 5S, 5 Why and TPM sections several times - the sections are brief, but there is some hard won wisdom in those passages.

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