

Book Review- by Dr. Shyr Chui

This is Lean. Resolving the Efficiency Paradox.

Niklas Modig and Par Ahlstrom, Rheologica 2012

For all you Lean fans, this book is a masterclass but not the one you're expecting. If you have any experience or training in Lean for Healthcare, you'll recognize the tools this framework uses. But in the back of your mind, you're also aware that, despite the elegance of this methodology, very few hospitals and healthcare organizations have successfully implemented Lean across its entire system in the same way Toyota has with its Toyota Production System. In Toyota's case, its executives were so confident that western auto industry competitors would be unable to implement its manufacturing system, it routinely and openly invited them to tour its facilities and shared its trade secrets.

So why the disconnect? Why is Lean so hard to implement across organizations and maximize its potential? This book aims to explain the reasons why. It turns out, it's not about the tools we all recognize, but it's about philosophy. It's about alignment and coherence.

In a very logical and systematic way, the authors take the reader on a journey to a higher level of understanding about what Lean is and more importantly what Lean is not. Using well-chosen examples and case stories, the book's thread is easy to follow and understand. The authors' introduction of an Efficiency Matrix concept is particularly illuminating when explaining the tension between resource efficiency vs. flow efficiency.

If you're expecting a book on Kaizen, Kanban and Just in Time tools, I suggest you read Womack and Jones' "The Machine that Changed the World" or "Lean Thinking". Excellent as both these books are, they underplay the importance of the underlying core values and principles of Lean which give its methods and tools the strategic direction and framework through which to deliver flow efficiency. This book fills that gap and will round out your knowledge and understanding of Lean enabling you to apply it more effectively.

Favorite quote:

*"Values define how an organization should behave.
Principles define how an organization should think.
Methods define what an organization should do.
Tools define what an organization should have."*

Recommended reading? Score 5*/5

For graduating from Lean Padawan to Jedi Master, absolutely you should.