

Yesterday's lessons:

By; Rick Walmsley

Kaizen, Six Sigma, LEAN and other popular systems designed to improve your quality and performance are great tools for the manager or team that has the time and resources to learn statistical process control, failure mode and effects analysis, process mapping, DMAIC and on and on. Most of you may even know that Kaizen is synonymous with Toyota and their model for continuous improvement. In fact, much of this formal methodology was perfected in Japan. What is being forgotten is the groundbreaking work of American engineer William Edwards Deming who laid the foundation for these systems in Japan at a time when American industrialists preferred to take profits rather than re-invest in improvements.

Just as lost today is the work of Frank and Lilian Gilbreth. So influential was their insight into finding the most efficient way to perform any task that their discoveries are still in use today. The modern kitchen design that considers the relationship between fridge, stove and sink is courtesy of the Gilbreths; as is the OR nurse supporting the surgeon and a host of other improvements we take for granted today. They also firmly established for the inclusion of the "human element" into any scientific management study or improvement planning initiative.

Even if you understand what software is telling you; a computer doesn't know your people.