

Foreword to
Sustaining Continuous Innovation through Problem Solving

by

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With his new book, *Sustaining Continuous Innovation through Problem Solving*, Stephen Armstrong broadens his well-known and respected approach to business transformation, pointing toward the crucial aspect of sustainability.

Today, approximately 95 per cent of all business improvement initiatives fail to show sustainable results, let alone signs of continuous improvement. Toyota – the number one automobile manufacturer in the world – is demonstrating nicely how to achieve process excellence and leadership, and furthermore, how to maintain and continuously improve these achievements – through a flawless execution of Process Leadership + People Engagement.

Armstrong addresses both these aspects to generate *Sustaining Continuous Innovation* in depth, and at the same time presents a structured, understandable, and practical blueprint for business transformation.

The USA's manufacturing and service industries are confronted with the growing challenge to withstand increasing global competition, China being the No. 1 threat to manufacturing in North America. In addition, customer expectations are going up and up, influenced by the almost 100 per cent transparency provided by the World Wide Web.

The good news: We are not doomed to fail or be forced to off-shore our entire production - as Stephen outlines it in his book. However, we must do our homework and look under our own feet first. We will soon see that there is a way to stay competitive by following Stephen's guidelines, engaging our workforce, and aligning them toward common goals.

The structure of Stephen's book is logical, sequential, and easy to follow. In Part I he focuses on Business Transformation and how to achieve organizational readiness, including an in-depth exploration of each business transformation phase. Part II visualizes the eight (8) steps that guide a company to sustainability, starting with analyzing the "As Is" and finishing with determination of the correct metrics to measure performance and improvement.

The remaining steps, 9 to 17 in Part III, put the emphasis on how to find the root causes for below-standard performance and how to effectively design and implement solutions that eliminate or reduce the effect of those causes. The final Part IV, closes the loop to sustainability by addressing the "soft side" of enterprise transformation and continuous

innovation. Here, the key ingredients for People Engagement and effective teamwork toward integrated “system thinking” are discussed – the core of sustained innovation.

If you are interested in effective business transformation with long-lasting and sustainable results, you will find everything needed in Stephen Armstrong’s book *Sustaining Continuous Innovation through Problem Solving*. Furthermore, Stephen leaves us with an interesting vision of a startling paradigm shift from – what I call – Process Excellence to People Engagement.

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