

Turbo Leadership Systems™

The **TURBO** **Charger**

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To our clients and friends

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Cool, Cooler & Coolest



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*Do it right
the first
time*

I recently met with the president of a firm that manufactures walk-in coolers. I learned early in the interview that their coolers are all manufactured to their restaurant customer's specifications. They don't try to compete with the "one-size fits all" walk-in cooler market. Much of their competition is offshore, and others are mass produced by domestic companies. Their competitive advantage is a quick turnaround time on custom coolers that have the height, width and depth to perfectly fit the space available in their customer's commercial kitchens. As we talked, I realized their business is very similar to another important client of ours, Pacific Stainless Products, who custom manufactures stainless steel kitchen components to customer's specifications in "two weeks and a day."

The president told me about a recent cooler which was manufactured for one of their repeat customers who is expanding with new restaurants across the United States. When the cooler arrived at the customer's new restaurant, one of the panels was made of a different finish material than the other panels. When this complaint hit the president's desk, he asked, "How in the world could this happen?" In the root cause analysis probing to find what had gone wrong in the process that resulted in this disruptive, costly mistake, they found the engineer who spec'd out the panel and learned that he had hand-created the specification drawings. They discovered that the specs he had been getting from the layout department had been inaccurate for years. When the president asked why he hadn't said something about it, he said, "I did, a dozen times, but no one listened, so I just started custom creating my own spec sheet and handing it on." This time he made a mistake on the material specifications and specified the

wrong color and finish.

This is an extraordinary story. The critical factor in this story, the thing that must change for things to become ideal is for upstream internal suppliers to start listening. If the organization learns the lesson that can be learned from this incident, they can create improvements in their entire organization. It is only as we listen to each other across functional boundaries that we can create continuous improvement. The routine practice in this business was for the design department to spec the materials inaccurately, then the layout department to create a custom worksheet, and then pass it on to the cutting department. This had become normal, and when things become routine, normal and expected, they are no longer a "problem." If we don't question our routines, there is no possible way to improve our practices. One of the ways you can dramatically improve the performance in your organization is to look at every handoff and ask in a sincere way, "How often do we have to double-check the specs, ask questions about the specs, change the specs, or puzzle over what the specs mean?" Unless the answer is "never" to each of these questions, you have room for improvement. Turbo Leadership Systems' Performance Team Lab (PTL) helps your entire team master the practices of a lean, learning organization. **Contact us** for more details and learn how you can speed up customer response while increasing quality and lowering costs.

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