

## The Power of Teams to bring about Culture Change

At the 2013 TPM & Lean Annual Forum, we were lucky enough to hear presentations from a number of our most successful clients. Simon Spiers, the **Site Manager** at **SunRice Leeton**, and his presentation on “The Power of Cross-functional Teams to bring about Culture Change” was one of many great case studies that we heard on the day.

Since their inception as a grower cooperative in 1950, SunRice is now a \$1 billion global food business and one of Australia’s largest branded processed food producers and exporters. On average, the NSW team supports 1,500 farming families; employs 1,000 people in Australia (currently 285 at Leeton) and feeds thousands more.

Rather than showcasing charts and figures to demonstrate the Leeton sites TPM success, Simon focused on detailing the sites vision and the ‘how’ behind some of the TPM concepts they applied. Simon even gave us some exclusive insider tips on the best ways to eat rice cakes (warmed up with a little bit of butter and vegemite).

**Figure 1 – Simon Spiers presenting at the Forum**



Starting off his presentation with an honest confession:

“I don’t know anything about WAM, I don’t know what OEM means. So today I won’t be preaching to you about TPM, I’ll be talking about culture change and how we use TPM to influence our

performance, engage our staff and get them to the next level.”

In their time of crisis, where a large number of new recruits resulted in a site with a lack of understanding about equipment, and frustration towards a lack training and staff engagement, SunRice Leeton turned to TPM for help.

“We were losing volume day after day and the place was becoming chaotic,” admitted Simon.

With a structured approach that aimed at engaging Operations and Reliability Teams with external resources to support the programs, Simon thought that CTPM could provide SunRice with the expertise they required to achieve successful and sustainable results. “I knew we didn’t have the knowledge internally to develop a whole program... we have dabbled in it (TPM) in the past, but I knew we needed an external resource to come and support us,” explained Simon.

Simon also valued that TPM allowed them to *challenge the status quo, building teamwork and a common language, developing a knowledge base for all personnel, establishing norms and standards, and taking a glass half full approach by looking at what needs to be improved, rather than what had gone wrong.*

However, Simon admitted that they did face some challenges when first deciding how to apply TPM to their own specific site. Their complex shift pattern, relatively isolated geographical location and management team with no exposure to TPM & Lean were some of the many problems the Leeton site faced during the preliminary stages of their **TPM & Lean (TPM<sup>3</sup>) journey**.

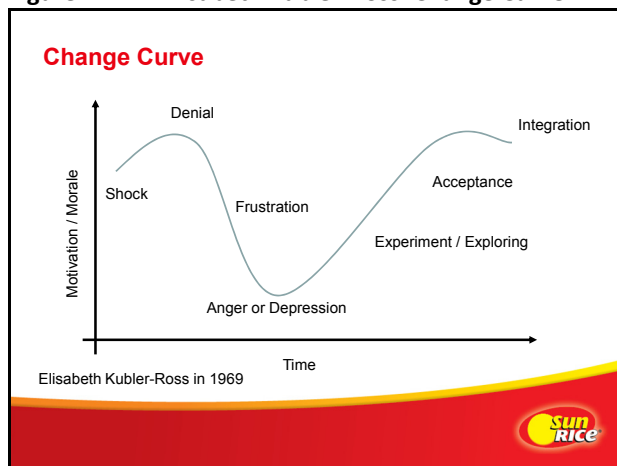
Although they had little TPM experience, by keeping the program as simple as possible and selecting people who were interested and passionate about driving change, the Leeton site were able to overcome these barriers and create

engaged teams that were willing to take on a challenge to achieve sustainable results with TPM<sup>3</sup>.

“It is really crucial that for the first cycle you think of who is on your team and how it works,” emphasised Simon. “We were more interested in choosing the people who had the right mindset. They were prepared to challenge the status quo and learn, and they were prepared to go that next little step.”

Simon then went on to outline the **key elements of their TPM<sup>3</sup> Journey** and began by showing Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’ Change Curve. Dr. Kübler-Ross developed the chart as seen below in 1969 to map the reaction process that people experience when they discover that they are terminally ill.

**Figure 2 – Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’ Change Curve**



As you can see, the individual often sinks into a period of denial and frustration before they can accept their fate. Simon explained that this same reaction process can be applied when considering the implementation of change within the business. Therefore, it is the role of the leaders to reduce the dip into frustration by ensuring that the site personnel understand the benefits of the change. This is where the **vision** comes in.

“You’ll always have people who say ‘this can’t be done’...but it’s all about that clear vision and where you want to get to that integration point,” explained Simon.

Simon emphasised that it is the quality of the vision that determines whether the project will be successful or not, and he listed a number of important ideas to consider whilst creating your vision. These included:

- What are you trying to achieve?

- What does success look like?
- What needs to change to close the gap?
- How do you build the energy and excitement levels up? and
- How will you share and sell the vision, and reinforce it at every opportunity?

Although the vision is important to consider throughout the journey, Simon emphasised that there are always variables that cannot be planned or predicted in advanced. *Rather than focusing on what you can’t control, you should focus on what you can change.*

He believes that it is the **people** that *make the difference* and, therefore, the selection process that comes with grouping personnel in teams is crucial. Leadership must be involved and engaged through walks around the floor, listening to all the ideas and filtering out the best, and conducting mid cycle presentations on the shopfloor in accordance to when it suits the teams, not the managers.

Another key component to their TPM<sup>3</sup> journey is **communication**. From Simon’s experience, communication needs to be frequent, to the point and specifically targeted for an outcome. Constant communication is important to re-enforce the vision and values and should be used within multiple mediums including newsletters, intranet sites, toolbox talks, Site BBQ’s and one on one conversation.

“You need to communicate as often as possible; there is never too much communication,” said Simon.

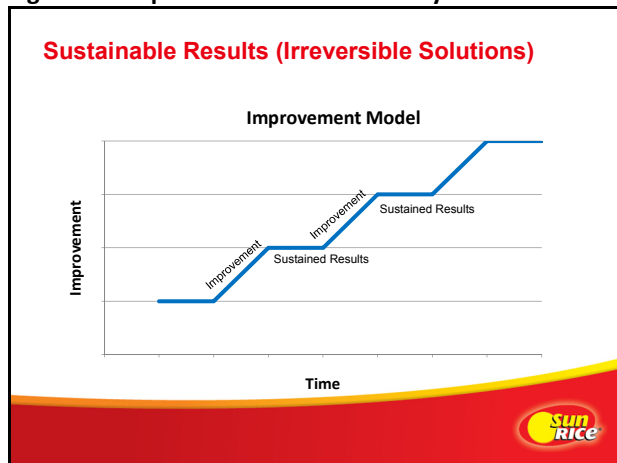
**Staff engagement** is another important factor to consider. Although it is imperative to involve as many people as practical, Simon also emphasised that you shouldn’t force people to be involved. Use diversity to create strength in the team and make the effort to show that the business success relies on the team outcomes.

Along with engagement, it is essential to **facilitate team and individual momentum**. SunRice Leeton used a short, sharp cycle and targeted approach by only focusing on one improvement at any one time. Simon emphasised the importance of weekly and daily review meetings to ensure that ideas are

being shared, issues are being raised and successes are being acknowledged at regular intervals.

Finally, the last key factor listed by Simon was **sustainable results**. He explained that if problems continue to reoccur it means that either the team has not gotten to the Root Cause of the problem or they have not implemented the correct measures.

**Figure 3 – Improvement Model used by Simon**



"It is really important that you build that sustainability into every single component of the project."

By following these core ideals throughout their journey, SunRice Leeton achieved a number of both tangible and intangible results. Some of the tangible achievements include increased factory output to a point where the packing plant is no longer the constraint.

***"At 245,000 tonnes two years ago, the packing plant couldn't keep up and now we're doing 285,000 tonnes and the packing plant is stripping the mill... and next year we'll be doing 330,000 tonnes,"*** boasted Simon with a grin.

In addition to this, production capability is aligned with sales and the business now also has confidence in the facility which is resulting in substantial investment across the site.

SunRice's intangible results are just as impressive. Production Team Leaders now have **pride** in their site, and maintenance and operations now have a **common language** which they use to work more closely on solutions together.

Simon admitted that their successes are largely due to a number of Key Success Factors including:

- Clear visions of "what can be?", "what will be?" and "what is success?"
- Determination / Tenacity;
- Patience;
- Sell the improvements to anyone who will listen;
- Believe in your team, yourself and your true north; and
- Enjoy the journey as well as the positive results.

Although SunRice Leeton achieved some great results, Simon did identify some tasks they could have done better. He thinks that they still need to improve the ownership of the Site Leadership Team towards the improvement journey, enhance communication on the challenges faced to complete projects, boost the base knowledge of the Site Leadership Team, and react more positively to initiatives.

Simon said they aim to confront these issues and more in their upcoming projects. With Cycle 2 currently underway, the SunRice Leeton team have already planned their Cycle 3 and 4. In the mean time, they also hope to encourage their personnel to visit other sites to become inspired by the work of others, develop the site leaders to drive the journey, and build up the team leaders' knowledge of TPM & Lean fundamentals in order to deliver the results.

Throughout the presentation, Simon continued to say that "the worst thing that can happen is that nothing happens," emphasising that there is nothing to lose by implementing TPM<sup>3</sup>.

Although Simon and the SunRice Leeton team still have a while to go, we would like to congratulate them on their fantastic results so far and express our excitement to continue supporting them throughout their TPM<sup>3</sup> journey.

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