Submission Title: “Lean RFS: Putting the Pieces Together”
Author Name(s): Ian Fraser Glenday and Rick Sather

The following feedback has been provided by a team comprised of members from the Board of Examiners. The team rated the submission based on the following categories.

1. Content

   a. Contribution to new knowledge and understanding of operational excellence

Glenday and Sather do a remarkable job of taking some well-known, but not very well understood, concepts and put them in a framework that makes sense and is easy to grasp. Through the example of Kimberly Clark, they demonstrate how the concepts of Flexible Flow can work. It is impressive to see the change in the entire culture of a large consumer goods company that typically is a batch producer.

The book clearly explains that batch logic focuses on machinery. It aims to improve results by focusing on economies of scale. Long runs with few changeovers seemingly make the operation and in particular the machinery more efficient. Repetition associated with short repeating runs or weekly routines give people a structure, a pattern and overall stability. These are the attributes most people prefer when they come to work every day; they want to do their jobs, not fight fires. The resulting stability allows for quicker learning, a focus on improvement, and a much more fulfilling work environment. When people do the same task more frequently, they get much better at it, they come up with more improvement suggestions and quality improves.

There has not been much, if any, writing which focuses on this fundamental principle and the process to apply. The discussion around this paradigm shift from batch to flow is very well written. It moves the student from traditional thinking to new thinking. The concept of scheduling ‘green’ items based on time
vs. quantity provides a whole new dimension on how repeatability can drive sustainable improvement.

The publication is a workbook and is short on theory and full of application, the assumption being that most students of lean thinking are familiar with the theory. What is usually missing and where the authors hit the mark is moving quickly from the theory to application.

**b. Potential for significant impact on practice and sustainability of performance improvements**

“Lean RFS” has a very high potential for significant impact because it addresses the most fundamental concept of lean and does so in a way that is easily understandable and reasonably easy to follow. Examiners would recommend this book and the process it outlines to many companies, even some who profess to be lean but are bogged down in the application of tools. Without the application of the fundamental principle of leveled production, there can be no successful lean implementation, so those companies need to go back to apply this concept/principle.

The book defines a very clear path to be followed, from the five-day workshop and beyond, and does so with clear examples from the KC experience. This book is not about theory, but real results. Examiners feel it can have widespread results since large batch processors or process industries believe lean is only for discrete manufacturers. This book shows otherwise.

The authors really get you to think about the accepted logic and wisdom of long runs in a process industry. They take the reader through an evolution and transformation in thinking. This is not a quick process; it has taken years for KC to move from what was their current state (batch thinking) to flexible-flow thinking. The authors make it clear the process takes time and only those committed to the long-term process will see the results.

**2. Premise**

Examiners strongly agree with the authors’ premise that the foundation of TPS is leveled production and most companies beginning the lean journey fail to start there. They applaud the authors for their effort to define a process to get there. The authors’ premise is extremely important. Becoming lean is a struggle at best, and to try to do so without first leveling production likely results in some visible gains, which are likely to erode and may only result in short-term or illusory business results. One examiner personally experienced the result the authors describe in
which the workers who can do their job in a planned, repetitive process get into a rhythm and can find all the other opportunities to gain uptime, effectiveness, and top tier results in a relatively short period of application. The authors’ use of the KC implementation as a teaching process is very clear and highlights the successful accomplishment of their premise.

3. Presentation

Examiners found the text to be readable and easily understood. The book is very thought-provoking and well organized. It explains the entire change process at KC very clearly with great examples and data. The use of Rick Sather’s personal experience in KC is insightful and reinforces the old adage that just as Ford will never “catch” Toyota neither will KC’s competitors catch them. But the KC story and the clearly documented and quite impressive results are an important element of that. The charts and illustrations are helpful as they allow the reader to study the data and interpret its meaning very easily. Examiners especially liked the definitions and chart examples of TIP and TOP, which clarify the relationship and application of both measures. The authors did a very good job of setting the stage of the flaws of batch thinking and effectively present their case for RFS. Overall the layout of the topics and progression from the current state to the future state was well done.