



The Gold Mine: A Novel of Lean Turnaround

Freddy Balle, Michael Balle

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Shingo Prize Research winner in 2006

The Gold Mine: a Novel of Lean Turnaround deftly weaves together the technical and human pieces of implementing lean manufacturing in an engaging story that readers will find both compelling and instructive. Authors Freddy and Michael Ballé have produced the first integrated and systematic approach to a set of ideas that have maximized value and minimized waste throughout the world. At the heart of the Gold Mine is Bob Woods, a curmudgeonly sensei coaxed out of retirement by his son Mike to help boyhood friend Phil Jenkinson save his struggling company. Despite terrific products and a backlog of orders, Phil's company cannot generate enough cash from its operations to pay its bills. And so Mike enlists Bob to help his pal fix this crisis.

"You're trying to deal with your mess as if it was a technical problem," Bob tells Phil. "Move this machine here, change this design there, which it is to some extent, but ... it's all about people. You have a leadership problem not just a production or business problem." As Phil begins to tackle the key challenges necessary to improve his company's operations, he comes to understand the deeper points of lean. Readers will also draw powerful insights from his journey.

The Gold Mine presents all the key lean principles, ranging from well-known ideas such as pull and flow, to lesser-known yet equally important principles such as jidoka and heijunka. The book also reveals lean as a system—using a realistic story to show how the principles are interrelated and how they lead to useful tools such as kanban or 5S.

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