Lean Glossary and Terms

Kaizen: Japanese term that means continuous improvement, taken from the words '*Kai*' that means continuous and '*zen*' that means improvement.   'Event' refers to a week-long, focused improvement exercise

Charter: A document or sheet that clearly scopes and identifies the purpose of a Quality improvement project. Items specified include background case, purpose, team members, scope, timeline

Value stream mapping is a lean-management method for analyzing the current state and designing a future state for the series of events that take a product or service from its beginning through to the customer. It can be applied to nearly any value chain.

Sponsor: Person who supports a team's plans, activities and outcomes; the team's backer.

Team Leader: Team leader's roles should include organizing team meetings, keeping the efforts on track, providing updates on team progress to management, addressing team dynamics, and serving as liaison between the team and other parts of the organization, helping solve problems and handling administrative duties.

Project Manager: Person assigned to lead a project: duties include planning, scheduling and controlling the project through completion.

Lean: The establishment and enhancement of system flow, principally through the identification and elimination of waste and the continual reduction of required resources.

This definition is deceptively simple, which is proven every day by companies which misinterpret and mis-apply lean tools and techniques, in a vain attempt to 'save' their way to greater profitability. For example, many organizations 'cherry pick' and implement specific lean tools, without understanding the effects of culture or the true nature of system problems.

One criticism of lean perennially heard among rank-and-file workers is that lean practitioners and upper management may easily focus too much on the tools and methodologies of lean, and fail to focus on the philosophy and culture of lean.