

22ND ANNUAL

Barriers to Lean Transformation of the Construction Industry

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THE ABC'S OF LEAN: TRANSFORMATION THROUGH ACTIONS, BEST PRACTICES AND COACHING

October 20, 2020



22ND LCI CONGRESS
OCTOBER 19-23

Problem Statement

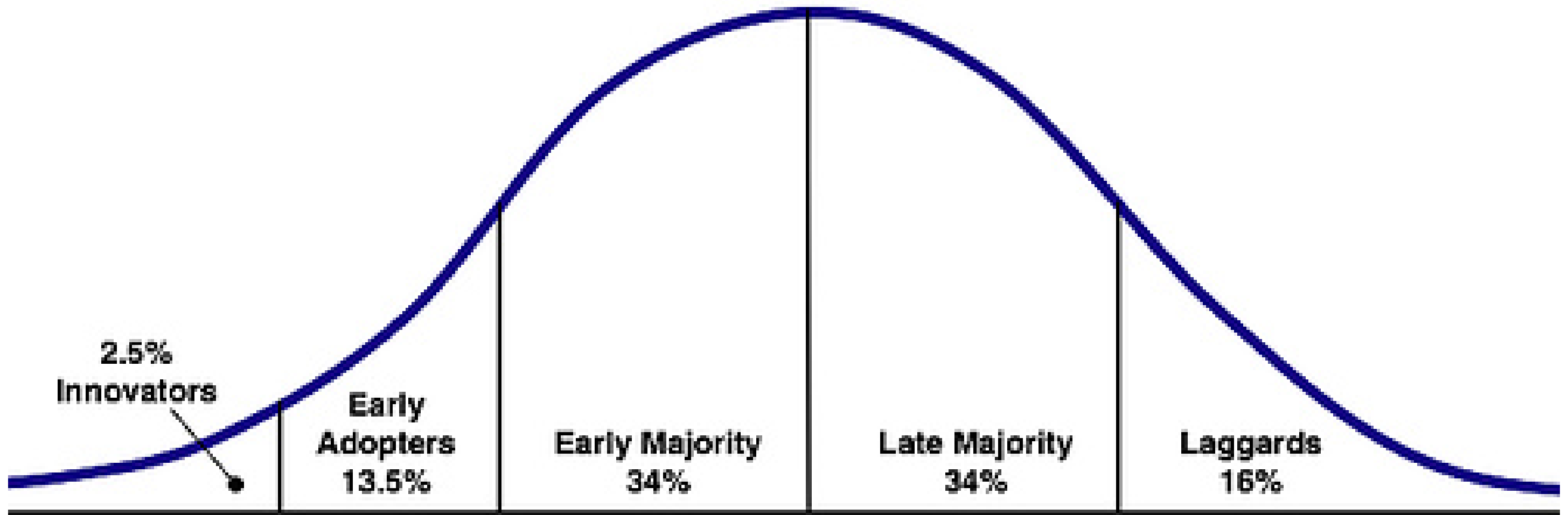
The mission of LCI is “...to transform a broken design and construction industry through Lean thinking, tools, and techniques.” To make that happen, LCI develops research products to help companies implement Lean more effectively; learning programs to help answer the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of Lean implementation; and events, such as this Congress, to promote Lean learning and networking across the industry (a paraphrase from the LCI website). All of these programs assume that people either are open to learning and change or can be persuaded to become so.

Individuals and companies that live off the waste in the traditional way of operating in construction don't want to be persuaded to change; they **refuse to listen**. Living off the waste ranges from corruption/criminality to simply making lots of money doing business traditionally.

For some, evidence for Lean's benefits are simply **unbelievable** because they contradict fundamental assumptions about the industry and the world. They may attend conferences and training, but will leave unpersuaded.

Many others will have **no incentive to listen to evidence and argument until compelled** by client demands and pressure from Lean competitors. You can't get them into conferences and training sessions.

Persuasion is essential for transforming the construction industry, but there are substantial barriers to be overcome. Today's presentation will explore the obstacles to persuasion and ways to overcome those obstacles.

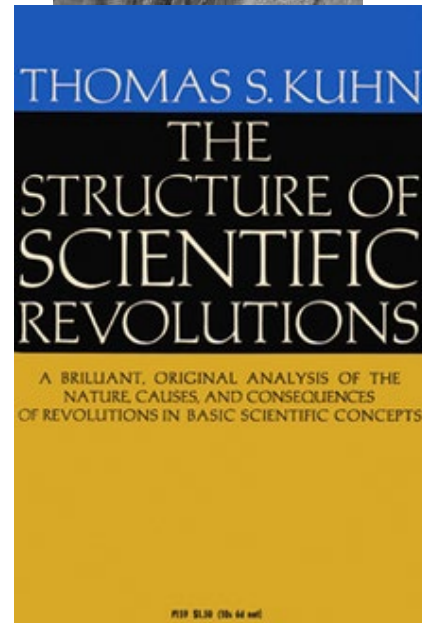


Source: Ernest Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations/Flickr

Barriers to the take-up of Lean

- Paradigms
- Resistance by those who live off the waste
- Failure to educate the youth in new concepts and principles before they become habituated to the old
- Not understanding how industries, organizations and individuals change

What are Paradigms?



Assumptions about reality; the filter through which one sees the world—facts only have meaning through the lens of paradigms.

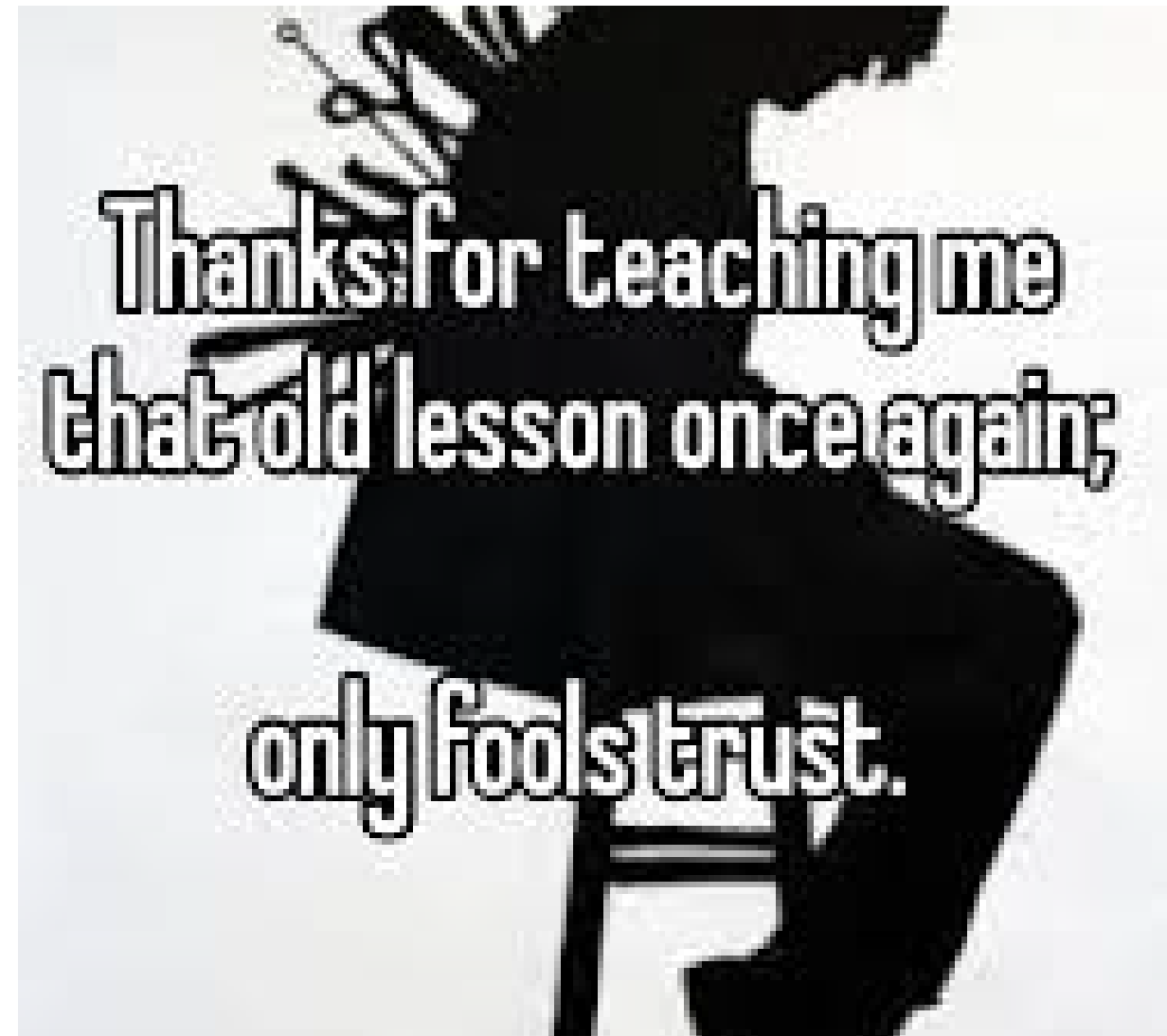
Is seeing believing or is believing seeing?

In traditional paradigms,
Lean's claims are impossible.



Traditional Construction Industry Paradigms

- Trust is for suckers
- Win-win is an illusion. What counts is that I win.
- You can manage projects by managing contracts.
- Risk is managed when transferred to someone else.
- If you pay the least price to buy project materials and labor, you pay least price for the project.



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What can be done....

- with those who live off the waste, so **don't want to be persuaded to change**:
 - For criminals, eliminate corruption
 - For fat cats, make business as usual unprofitable
- with those who **cannot be persuaded because of their paradigms**:
 - Educate the next generation before they become habituated to traditional thinking and practice
 - Create commercial pressure that compels those in the grips of traditional paradigms to experience Lean
- with those who **are willing to listen, but still need persuading**:
 - Provide ways for them to experience Lean thinking and acting through 'games'. It won't work with everyone, but for those less firmly in the grasp of traditional paradigms and less satisfied with their current states, it can be effective.
 - Teach and enable everyone in your organizations to make reliable promises, learn from mistakes, improve their own work methods and participate in improving the processes in which they do their work.



Key Points

- Lean is a new paradigm for managing human organizations that produce goods and services of all kinds.
- If we assume that ‘seeing is believing’, we will focus only on accumulating evidence for the benefits of Lean Construction as our means of persuasion without regard to the willingness of people and organizations in different situations to listen and learn.
- Previous paradigms are among the major obstacles to a Lean transformation of the construction industry—but also important: resistance by those living off the waste in traditional practice, failure to incorporate Lean into education, and not having effective models for transformation.
- Evidence persuades only those willing and able to be persuaded. Others first require compulsion -- demands by buyers of their services and competition from providers of their services.
- Once compelled, the experience of Lean thinking and practice tends to persuade those previously unwilling or unable to see.



How can you apply this tomorrow?

- Those in position to provide political leadership in different parts of the world can work to eliminate corruption.
- Researchers can
 - capture and develop knowledge about how industries, organizations and individuals change
 - Accumulate evidence against the assumed truth of paradigms for use with those who can be persuaded by evidence
- Educators can educate the Next Generation before they become habituated to traditional thinking and practice
- Those in position to provide leadership for the Lean transformation of the construction industry can develop and implement strategies that put market pressure on those who cannot yet be persuaded by evidence
- Those trying to take their organizations Lean can figure out who can be persuaded by evidence and who needs to experience Lean in order to 'see' it.



Thank you for your attention.





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Contact Us

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