

# Relational approach to process improvement

## What is it?

- A relational approach to process improvement combines technical tools with relational tools
- Relational tools to build psych safety - then build shared goals, shared knowledge and mutual respect through high quality communication
- Technical tools can do the same when used in a relational way

## What is it used for/ Purpose?

- Together technical and relational tools help workers to improve work processes and achieve their desired performance outcomes

# Many technical approaches to process improvement

- ◆ Reengineering
- ◆ Total quality management
- ◆ Quality improvement
- ◆ Lean
- ◆ Six sigma
- ◆ Improvement science (IHI)

# Addressing technical issues is necessary - but not sufficient

“We’ve been doing process improvement for several years, and we think we’re on the right track. But we’ve tried a number of tools for process improvement, and they just don’t address the relationship issues that are holding us back.”

- Bob Hendler, Tenet Healthcare Systems

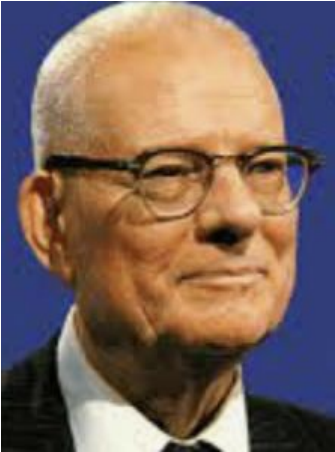
# Relational issues are part of process improvement

- Need multiple perspectives to solve systems problems
- Change may create loss and grief and therefore will require a relational response
- Successful change requires commitment, not just compliance, so shared goals are very helpful



Baker, N. J., Suchman, A., & Rawlins, D. (2016). [Hidden in plain view: Barriers to quality improvement](#). *Physician Leadership Journal*, 3, 54-7.

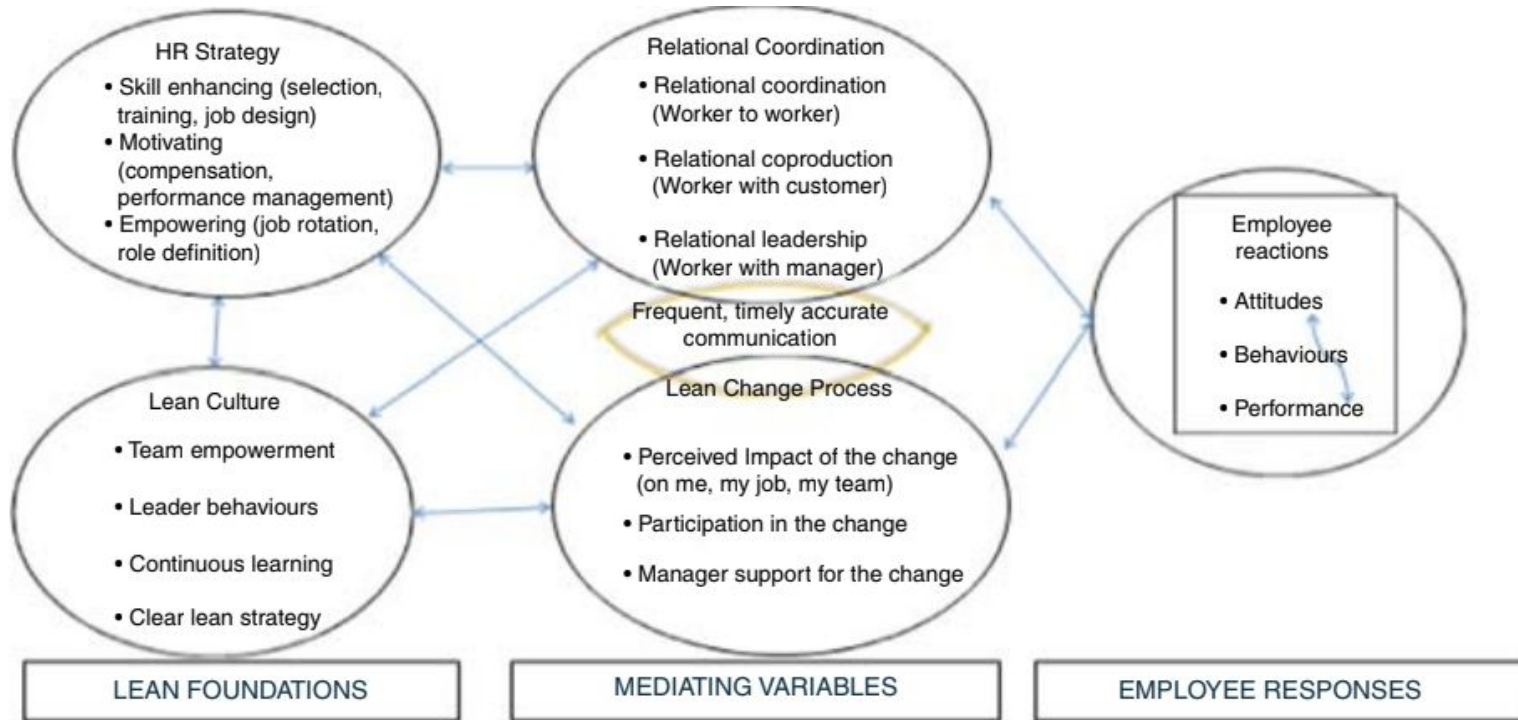
# Relational approach to process improvement



Relationships of shared goals,  
shared knowledge and mutual respect  
*create a culture that supports  
process improvement*

W. E. Deming (1986). *Out of the Crisis*. MIT Press.

# Relational coordination as the social pillar of lean



McMackin, J., & Flood, P. (2019). [A theoretical framework for the social pillar of lean.](#) *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*, 6(1), 39-55.