

## End of Year Reflection –2020

By Mike Huszar, President of DRIVE, Inc.

Oh, what a year 2020 has been! Where does one start? There is an ancient Chinese Proverb that states, “The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second-best time is now.”

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TWENTY YEARS AGO. THE SECOND  
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Like many of you, we at DRIVE should have planted more trees twenty years ago. But that time is gone. How many trees did we plant this year? More than we could have ever imagined.

### TREE #1 – ABILITY TO IMPROVE WITHOUT BEING ON-SITE

Our team reduced from basically 100% of our work being on-site with clients to 50% of our work being on-site. From April to June, it was essentially 0% on-site. Of course, we did not maintain the same volume of work as before, but remote improvement was far more effective than I would have ever imagined! We have clients that took a very conservative approach to defining “essential employees” and have had everybody else working from home since April. One client intends to do so at least through March of 2021 and yet there is a great deal of improvement occurring. This is despite the support resources connecting via collaboration technologies like Zoom and MS Teams. The gemba (the real place – where the work gets done) hasn’t changed, but the definition of gemba walk and gemba kaizen sure has changed! It is our sincere hope that you planted the tree of improvement (both on-site and remote improvement) this year and didn’t take a mulligan in 2020, starting 2021 flat-footed.

### TREE #2 – TECHNOLOGY IS BETTER THAN OUR TRADITIONAL PROCESS FOR SOME THINGS

Many of our workshops are scheduled as Rapid Improvement Events; typically starting Monday morning and finishing up on Friday afternoon. In the past, it was not unusual to be re-scoping the event on Monday morning, searching for some of the participants, realizing that much of the pre-work was not accomplished, etc. Now, via the remote technologies, we can do a very robust job of pre-work, planning, and scoping of events. This has been so much better, that we intend to continue this even after all restrictions are lifted. The full preparation allows us to either hold the event in less than five full-days or to scope the event to accomplish more within a full week.

We also found that many of our events like training, value stream mapping, value analysis / value engineering and strategic planning are more effective two hours per day with homework and reflection than trying to squeeze everything into a full week of 8-to-10-hour days with little time to reflect and adjust. We believe this will be maintained as the new normal going forward, based on the improved outcomes. We have worked with global teams that typically schedule these events in one location, spending tens of thousands of dollars on travel and requiring everything to be accomplished within a few short days before the team disperses to go back to their bases of operation. Remote improvement has been most effective with global, multi-national teams.



Of course, there are some improvements that simply should be done together at the point of the problem. However, that doesn't mean that we can't conduct more pre-work, preparation, and planning prior to meeting together. It also doesn't mean that we can't conduct follow-ups remotely rather than being together.

The post-work follow-up, typically one hour per week to check, reflect, and adjust, was typically done only once per month or so, waiting for when we would arrive on-site again. Now, it is normal to simply schedule those follow-up sessions and hold them remotely. This has resulted in more timely completion of actions and improved response to obstacles.

### **TREE #3 – WE CAN CONTINUE TO IMPROVE INTERNALLY EVEN WHEN REMOTE**

We typically conduct consultant alignment events where we focus on a development topic and spend 3 days together as a team. It is a great time of team building, best-practice sharing, and development. We had an event scheduled that we had to cancel. That is when we thought, "Why not hold it remotely?" That would be practicing what we preach. Rather than conduct full-day events with packed agendas, we scheduled multiple events that were two hours each. The cost savings were tremendous but more importantly, our goals of team building, best-practice sharing, and development were all accomplished. Here is the team photo that was snapped during one of the events:



### **TREE #4 – THIS IS NOT ONLY ABOUT WORK. WE CAN DO THIS AT HOME TOO!**

How many people have you conversed with that have wasted the last nine months with their families? They are all spending far more time together than ever before, but they interact with each other less and have developed some poor habits such as comfort food binges, television show binges, and a general malaise of inactivity. We saw this occurring in the first few weeks and made a quick 180-degree turn. We established daily disciplines including exercise and improved diet (it's amazing how healthy

one can eat when the restaurants are shut down!). Many of the DRIVE practitioners, myself included, are in better shape now than sixteen years ago when we started the company!

We discussed since the beginning of the shut-down that many leaders will use this opportunity wisely while many others will squander the opportunity. Even if you haven't accomplished everything that you would have liked this year, there is no time like the present! Planting the tree today is the second-best time to plant it! To help your company to "plant more trees," contact Paul Eakle at [Paul.Eakle@DriveInc.com](mailto:Paul.Eakle@DriveInc.com) or 865-323-3491 for a no obligation introduction meeting.

