

Note: This article is part ten of a ten part series written by Art Smalley in conjunction with the 2014 TWI Summit hosted by Lean Frontiers. Art helped facilitate a meeting of TWI thought leaders that is held each year during the Summit. Following this meeting, Smalley composed his thoughts and opinions in a series of papers aimed to support the TWI community's body of knowledge. Smalley's website can be found at www.artoflean.com. The annual TWI Summit website can be found www.twisummit.com.

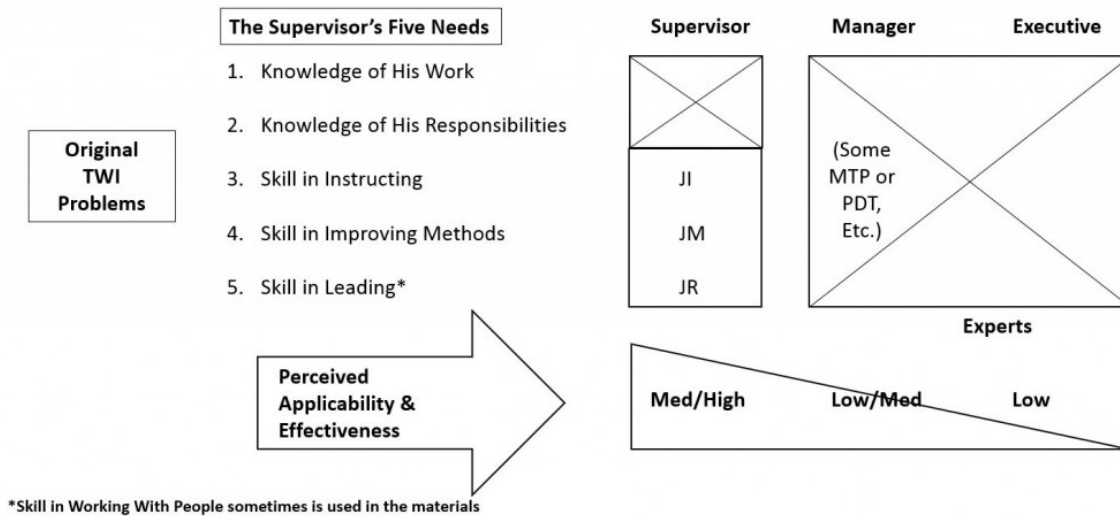
In the previous nine posts I shared some ideas on how to improve TWI Job Instruction, Job Relations, and Job Methods for the 21st century. There is nothing wrong per se with the contents however when scrutinized closely I see some honest needs for improvement. Some of the ideas are across the board such as improving the train the trainer experience. Others are specific to the topic such as developing a more proactive form of Job Relations or more advanced tools for Job Methods. In this final post I will simply summarize the situation and reiterate my request for volunteers. I am hopeful that some parties will be interested enough in these topics to take action and develop some new material. I simply do not have the time any more or attachment to TWI materials. I would like to see them improved for the 21st century.

The original situation with the TWI training courses in the United States was pretty clear and fairly universal. World War II took young men out of the factory while volumes doubled or quadrupled etc. New workers flooded into the work force and there were critical skills shortages in virtually every company. The concept was splendid in design as well as implementation. However we cannot hide from the fact that the TWI courses virtually disappeared from the face of the planet within a few years of their introduction. The perceived need was reduced and the applicability somehow lost over time. By the 1960's the last companies in the U.S. were basically finished with TWI and most stopped much earlier than that. The materials continued to exist mainly in national archives and a few university libraries here and there.

A very very few companies such as Toyota in Japan continued to use the courses in some fashion or other over the decades. Those companies are the exception rather than the norm and that needs to be kept in mind. It is due to the success of Toyota and TPS (and other companies of course) that has helped to rekindle interest in TWI material worldwide. I fear however that this might simply be a repeat of the past and a fad for a decade or so. Hopefully I am wrong on that front as I think the contents of TWI and developing fundamental skill sets is very important. These skills are not something taught in schools or in most organizations. I hope they don't fade away again.

Reflecting back the TWI developers focused on the Five Needs of a Supervisor. I still agree with those five needs as they are timeless. However as one goes higher in the organization up into the ranks of managers, subject matter experts, and executives the TWI concepts are perceived to be less relevant due the examples and way they are presented. The concepts of course apply however it takes a different form than what is explained in the sacred TWI instructional scrolls of the past. The following graphic summarizes most managerial and executive attitudes towards TWI. In other words it is great for supervisors but not so great for the rest of us. TWI fanatics can argue the point but that is how the material is viewed by others whether they like the point or not.

Revisiting the Original TWI Situation



First principles are first principles however in life and physics. Skill in instructing, improving, and leading are timeless concepts. They may take on different forms at different levels of the organization. And as I pointed out in [Part 4 of Improving TWI Job Instruction](#) the assumption and underlying pattern needs to change for higher skill creative or inventive type work. So opportunistically I think this is an area of great opportunity for TWI as a whole. Individual parties will of course disagree with and believe they have cracked the code on all of this topic. Or perhaps they will invoke an ancient example from a dead TWI trainer in the U.S. or in another country. Honestly in neither case am I the least bit interested...What I am looking for is an improvement in terms of a better way for all parties implementing TWI in the 21st century. I am looking for fundamental improvements to the areas of instruction, materials, and deployment of the concepts. If the TWI materials were perfect and so applicable in every case then its usage should not have petered out in the first place. Other factors of course came into play still I think this point is worth reflecting on for perspective.

The Toyota Production System has been undergoing improvement continuously since the early 1950's (and earlier if you go back further). TWI efforts in contrast seem stuck to their original roots and materials. I doubt that will be enough to keep the topic relevant in the 21st century. So my question to you is who are the Four Horsemen of TWI for the 21st century? The distinguished gentlemen below made some remarkable progress on the topics outline above. However I bet they would be disappointed to learn we were merely standing in their shadows over 70 years later.



"THE FOUR HORSEMEN"

1944

Dooley

Dietz

Conover

Kane