

## BACKGROUND

The purpose of the **Clean Slate** exercise is to make people aware of their responsibility in the work they are doing. The intention is to show how they have culpability in the situation they are in. It is extremely important however, that it not be used as a mechanism for blame.

There are two versions of this exercise. The first is the standard one. The second is a more intensive but produces deeper results; however, it also has risks associated with it as you will understand when you read the descriptions

## CLASSIC CLEAN SLATE

### HOW TO PLAY

Give each student a sheet of flip chart paper and tell them to consider the following questions:

- How have I failed the system you are in? (Usually means their organization)
- How has the system failed me?

They are to answer these questions by writing their answers on stickies, putting answers to Question 1 on the left and answers to question 2 on the right.

After writing down their answers, each person does a report out on what they wrote.

**Time:** This exercise takes about an hour.

### ABOUT COACHING THIS EXERCISE

This is sometimes called the “50/50” exercise since it illustrates how the people and the system each own 50% of the responsibility for what’s happening.

You will often see that the answers to Question 1 flow back to Question 2. This reflects Deming’s assertion that the system causes most of our problems. This does not negate our personal responsibility though, regardless of the system. The intent is to see the part we play in the system’s dysfunction.

**Systems thinking and the fact that systems play a massive role in our people’s dysfunction should be made clear prior to running this exercise.** This should take a bit of the sting out of the answers to Question 1 and it also provides insights into Question 2 beyond what Question 1 alone would provide.

After writing down their answers, each person does a report out on what they wrote.

## SOFTER CLEAN SLATE

### HOW TO PLAY

Put up two flip chart sheets each labeled as follows:

- How have I failed the system you are in? (Usually means their organization)
- How has the system failed me?

Explain to them that the “system you are in” usually means their organization.

Have the students write down the answers to each of these questions on stickies, one per sticky. When done, have them put them on the flip charts placed on one side of the room.

When all of this is done, get two people to volunteer to read the stickies. Have one person in front of each flipchart read the stickies, alternating between them.

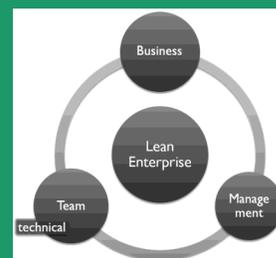
**Time:** This takes about 30 minutes.

## ABOUT COACHING THIS EXERCISE IN A FACILITATED DISCOVERY

The softer clean slate exercise is good to do on the morning of the third day of a Facilitated Discovery. Before doing it, however, another short exercise should be done beforehand - give participants 10 minutes to discuss why they are doing the transition and what will happen if they don't.

## NET OBJECTIVES

We are committed to delivering the principles, practices, and perspectives that businesses must know in order to maximize their return on their technology solution and software development efforts. We combine our experience and a time proven approach based on lean thinking to continuously extend the capability of what is possible in creating effective technology delivery organizations (IT or product). We provide these learned methods to our clients to assist them in achieving their goals and in assisting them in making their organizations more successful.



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