



WHITEPAPER

Boost your team effectiveness by visual strategy execution

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LEADING WITH
OBEDIENCE

Boost your team effectiveness by Leading with Obeya

In the evolving landscape of business management, managers continually seek solutions to navigate the challenges of leading multiple teams, driving strategy, and achieving organizational goals in complex organizations. Amidst this quest, Leading with Obeya (LWO) emerges as a beacon of clarity and effectiveness. This whitepaper delves into how managers can harness the power of the LWO method to address common management challenges, streamline operations, and foster a culture of alignment and continuous improvement within their teams by seeing, learning and acting together.





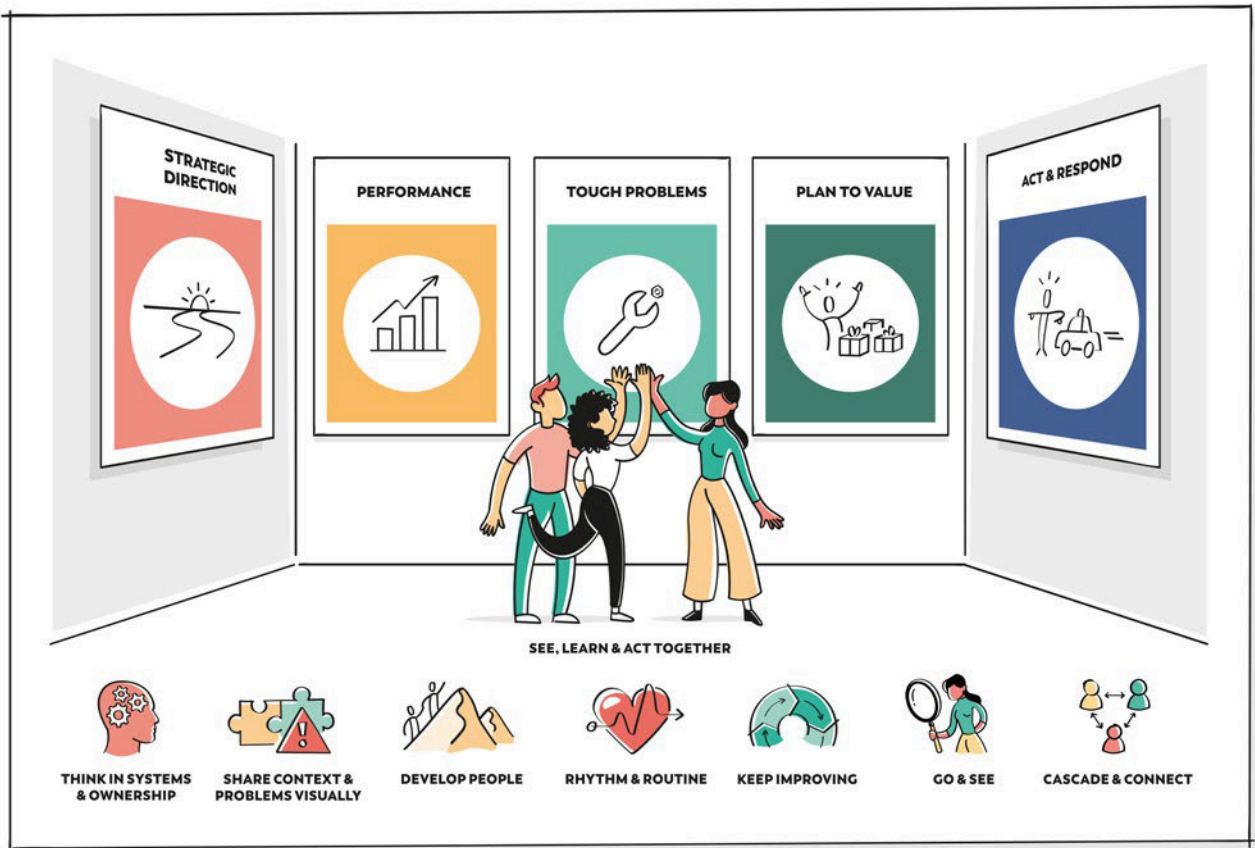
Confronting your management challenges

Management teams often sense the potential for improvement, feeling the strain of common issues that impede the effectiveness of how they function as a team:

- **Strategic plans gathering dust instead of guiding action**
Despite the best intentions, many strategic plans end up sidelined, forgotten amidst the daily grind, failing to inspire action or guide decision-making.
- **Siloed departments that hinder collaboration and communication**
Organizational silos create barriers to information flow and collaboration, undermining overall performance.
- **Multitasking projects that lead nowhere, creating confusion about priorities**
Teams juggle multiple projects without clear priorities, leading to diluted focus and stalled progress.
- **Lack of overview and business performance**
Resulting in management of things that may not matter that much in the larger scheme of things.
- **Constant firefighting due to operational inefficiencies**
Reactive problem-solving dominates, leaving little room for strategic thinking or proactive measures.
- **Endless meetings that seem to add little value**
Time-consuming meetings often fail to produce actionable outcomes, draining energy and enthusiasm.

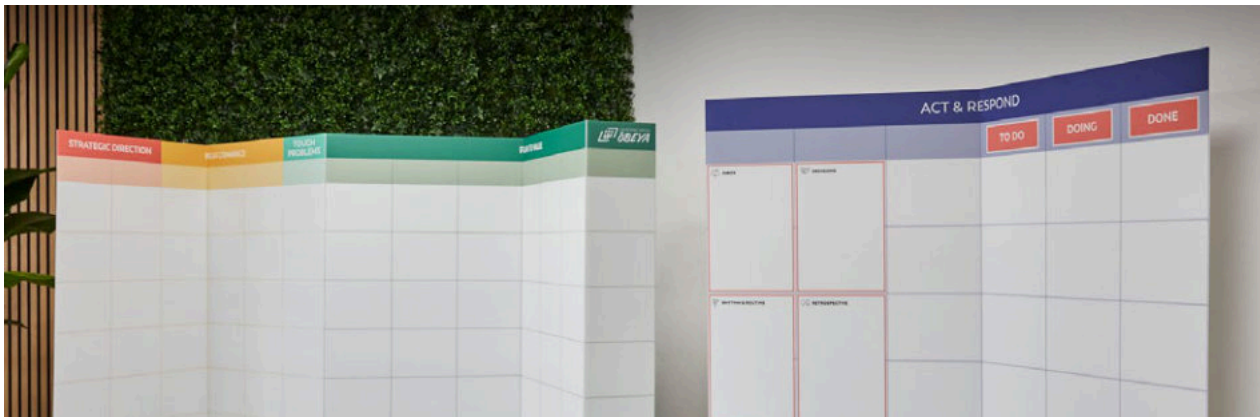
Addressing these management challenges is crucial, not just for operational effectiveness, but for the overall health of your organization and your well-being as a manager. Persisting issues can lead to a demoralized team, decreased productivity, and missed opportunities for growth. For you, the effects of not solving these issues can lead to constant stress and losing the sense of purpose in your job. Moreover, siloed departments and unclear priorities can stifle innovation and agility, putting your organization at a competitive disadvantage. It's essential to confront these challenges head-on to foster a more engaged, productive, and innovative workplace.

How Leading with Obeya works



In an Obeya / room that applies Leading with Obeya you'll find visual representations of the team's strategy, performance indicators, problems to be solved, and plans for delivering value. These visuals capture all key aspects of what's important for the management team, enabling them to use these cues to prioritize, guide discussions, decisions, and actions. Many teams report that the overview gives them peace of mind.

Moreover, LWO is built on Lean and Agile principles, but makes them easily applicable to management team routines. This makes it the perfect fit for organizations seeking the benefits of Lean or Agile ways of working.



What's on the walls?

Five boards make the basic setup for a Leading with Obeya room. Important to note: the team should always ensure the information on the walls helps them do their jobs well. So if more or different types of information is needed, the team should make place for this their room.



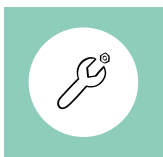
Strategic Direction

Sets the foundation by clarifying the team's goals and the capabilities needed to achieve them. This board ensures everyone understands the organization's direction and their role in navigating towards it.



Performance

Tracks the team's progress towards strategic objectives, using indicators to highlight successes and areas needing attention. This board helps in prioritizing efforts effectively.



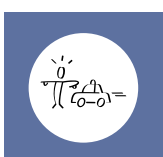
Tough Problems

Dedicated to identifying and solving complex challenges that hinder progress. It fosters a structured approach to problem-solving, ensuring that solutions are grounded in understanding and analysis rather than assumptions.



Plan to Value

Outlines the milestones required to deliver value to customers and the organization. It does not capture all the work done by teams, but rather keeps the overview of the key valuable things that are delivered and that the management team is ultimately responsible for. It creates overview for both management and the workforce. It helps ensure that teams are working on the right things and that milestones are met, reinforcing the link between daily activities and strategic goals.



Act & Respond

Addresses real-time issues and developments that impact work, ensuring the team remains agile and can adjust plans as necessary. This board supports a proactive stance in managing unforeseen challenges.

The power of any Obeya comes from the team



The team is central to the room because any Obeya is completely worthless without the team using it effectively. Seeing learning and acting together means fostering a collaborative environment where the team collectively observes, reflects, and takes action is vital. This principle is about leveraging the collective wisdom and effort of the team to address challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and continuously move towards strategic goals. It underscores the value of shared understanding and collective action in achieving better outcomes.

Principles for Thinking and Acting in Obeya

The visuals are more the outcome of something that's of much greater importance: how the team thinks and act. The effectiveness of Leading with Obeya is for a large part rooted in its ability to address and help guide effective routines for the management team. To guide this, the method describes seven principles for thinking and acting, which help teams in their daily operations and strategic decision-making:



Systemic Thinking & Ownership

Encourages viewing the organization as an interconnected system and assigns clear ownership for each component, promoting accountability and systemic improvements.



Visualizing Context & Challenges

By making critical information visible, teams can align their perceptions and understandings, reducing misinterpretations and fostering a shared view of challenges and opportunities.



Keep improving

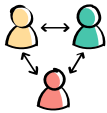
Emphasizes the importance of personal and team growth, advocating for an environment where learning and development are integral to overcoming obstacles and enhancing capabilities.

**Rhythm & Routine**

Establishes a structured approach to meetings and discussions, ensuring that they are timely, focused, and productive. This principle helps in maintaining momentum and alignment on strategic priorities. It is a key principle for Leading with Obeya as it establishes a habit for the team, making it a lasting improvement to their way of working.

**Go & See**

This principle emphasizes the importance of direct observation to understand the reality of the situation. It encourages leaders and teams to leave their desks and go to the place where work happens (the “Gemba”) to see for themselves. This hands-on approach helps in making informed decisions and avoids assumptions and misunderstandings.

**Cascade & Connect**

It underlines the interconnectedness of all teams and departments within an organization. By ensuring that strategies, goals, and key performance indicators are aligned across the board, this principle facilitates a seamless flow of information and decision-making that supports the overall strategic direction of the company.

**Develop People**

Emphasizes the continuous growth of both the team as well as the individual inside and outside the room. This principle is rooted in mutual respect and the commitment to fostering an environment where continuous personal and team development are prioritized. An outcome is that people become more effective and thus the work and business outcome improve.

The **outcome** of this way of working

Leading with Obeya directly tackles the abovementioned management challenges by fostering seeing, learning, and acting together as a central aspect for management team routines. This holistic approach transforms the way teams interact with information and each other. By visualizing data, strategies, and progress in a shared space, teams can see the big picture, where mutual goals and mutual understanding of the big picture emerges. It helps teams and individuals understand their role in it, and identify areas for cross-team collaboration and improvement. Learning together becomes a natural part of the process, as insights and challenges are openly discussed. This sets the stage for collective action, where decisions are made with a full understanding of their implications from a whole system view.

When asked about the effectiveness of Leading with Obeya for their management team after 6 months, the managers in this survey (N= 56) reported a top 5 of the following key improvements:



More effective meetings

The most frequently reported benefit is the improvement in meeting efficiency. Respondents highlight that Leading with Obeya has made their meetings more focused, productive, and time-efficient, indicating a significant impact on how teams collaborate and communicate.



Better collaboration and less siloed work

Another major benefit is the enhancement of teamwork and collaboration. Teams report better interdepartmental cooperation and a reduction in siloed or isolated work, fostering a more integrated and cohesive work environment.



Clearer progress on goals and performance

Teams have experienced improvements in tracking and understanding the progress towards their goals and overall performance. This suggests that Leading with Obeya provides effective tools and frameworks for monitoring and communicating key performance indicators and milestones.



Improved decision-making

The methodology has also contributed to better decision-making processes within teams. Respondents appreciate the clearer, more structured approach to analyzing information and making informed decisions, highlighting the value of visual management and strategic alignment.



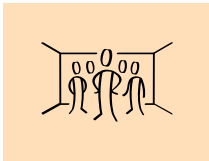
Clearer assigned responsibilities

The clarity in assigned responsibilities is identified as a key benefit. Teams find that Leading with Obeya helps in defining and communicating roles and responsibilities, ensuring accountability and facilitating smoother project execution and task management.

These benefits highlight the practical value of Leading with Obeya in fostering more efficient, cohesive, and agile teams, capable of better meetings and decisions, ultimately contributing to enhanced team performance and effectiveness.

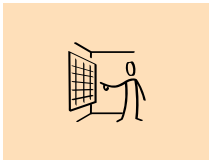
Starting with Leading With Obeya: **key steps**

To successfully integrate the Leading with Obeya methodology into your management practices, it's crucial to follow a structured approach. Here's how to begin:



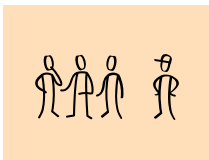
1 Ensure team buy-in

Begin by ensuring the entire team is clear about who is involved, understands the issues they aim to solve with Obeya, and is ready to commit to this new way of working. It's essential that all team members are on board and prepared to engage actively in the process, recognizing the value of collaboration and open communication that Obeya promotes.



2 Set up the obeya space

Choose a dedicated physical or digital space that will serve as your central hub for visualization and discussion. This space should be accessible to all team members and equipped to display key information and metrics effectively.



3 Participate in training

Since LWO introduces a distinct approach to teamwork and management, it's essential for the team to undergo formal training. This will help everyone understand the methodology's principles, tools, and practices, ensuring a smooth transition to this new way of working.



4 Setup the Obeya by refining strategy to execution

Engage the team in discussions to understand and refine the organization's strategy, working towards something that can be done next week. Emphasize that the effectiveness of Obeya lies in the quality of these conversations, not just the visual tools used. This step is crucial for ensuring that all team members are aligned and committed to the shared goals.



5 Initiate routines with a skilled facilitator

Begin your Obeya routines under the guidance of a trained and experienced LWO facilitator. This expert can help navigate the team through the initial phases, ensuring that the meetings are productive, the visual management tools are utilized effectively, and that the team is making progress towards solving their identified challenges.

By following these steps, your team can effectively implement the LWO methodology, setting a strong foundation for improved communication, strategic alignment, and collaborative problem-solving.

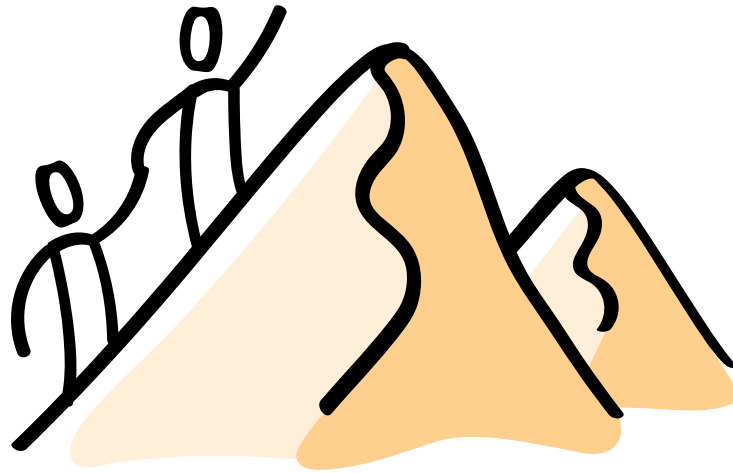
Scaling the **benefits**

Leading with Obeya is not just a tool for individual teams; it's a scalable management system that can transform organizational leadership. By implementing Obeya across various levels of an organization, leaders can create a unified framework for decision-making, aligning departmental goals with the overall strategic direction of the company. This alignment ensures that every team member understands their role in achieving success, leading to more effective leadership and a cohesive organizational culture.



Imagine a performance indicator like time to market at the board level, showing a delay due to frequent breakdowns in one of the old production lines at the bike factory. This issue, visible at all levels of the organization through cascading Obeya boards, illustrates how problems can be tracked and addressed from the top down and bottom up. Such an approach ensures alignment and accountability throughout the organization, demonstrating the scalability of LWO as a comprehensive management system.

Where to start?



LWO is a versatile and powerful methodology that can be initiated at any level within an organization, making it an ideal tool for driving widespread improvements and fostering a culture of continuous management and enhancement. Starting with LWO does not require a top-down mandate; a team or department can adopt the methodology to address specific challenges or enhance their management practices. This flexibility allows LWO to be accessible and applicable across various contexts within an organization, whether it's on the front lines of production or in the executive boardroom.

The implementation of LWO often generates curiosity and interest from other teams and departments who observe the positive changes it brings. As a continuous management and improvement system, LWO naturally encourages alignment and integration among different parts of the organization. This is achieved through the “cascade & connect” principle, where objectives, strategies, and key performance indicators are aligned vertically and horizontally across the organization. As more teams adopt LWO, this interconnectedness grows stronger, fostering a unified approach to achieving organizational goals. Teams start to see how their efforts contribute to the bigger picture, leading to a more cohesive and effective organization. The visibility provided by LWO encourages other teams to align their practices and objectives with those already using the methodology, creating a domino effect that amplifies the benefits across the organization.

Like to learn more?



Eager to improve your management practices? Here are steps to get started:

1 Read the book

2 Explore free Obeya resources

Dive into the free LWO network for templates, videos, articles, and a virtual demo Obeya, enriching your understanding of the methodology.

3 Engage with the Community

Join regular LWO webinars to learn from experienced practitioners and share insights. Also there a free monthly intro walk-in for people interested to chat to an LWO expert with questions.

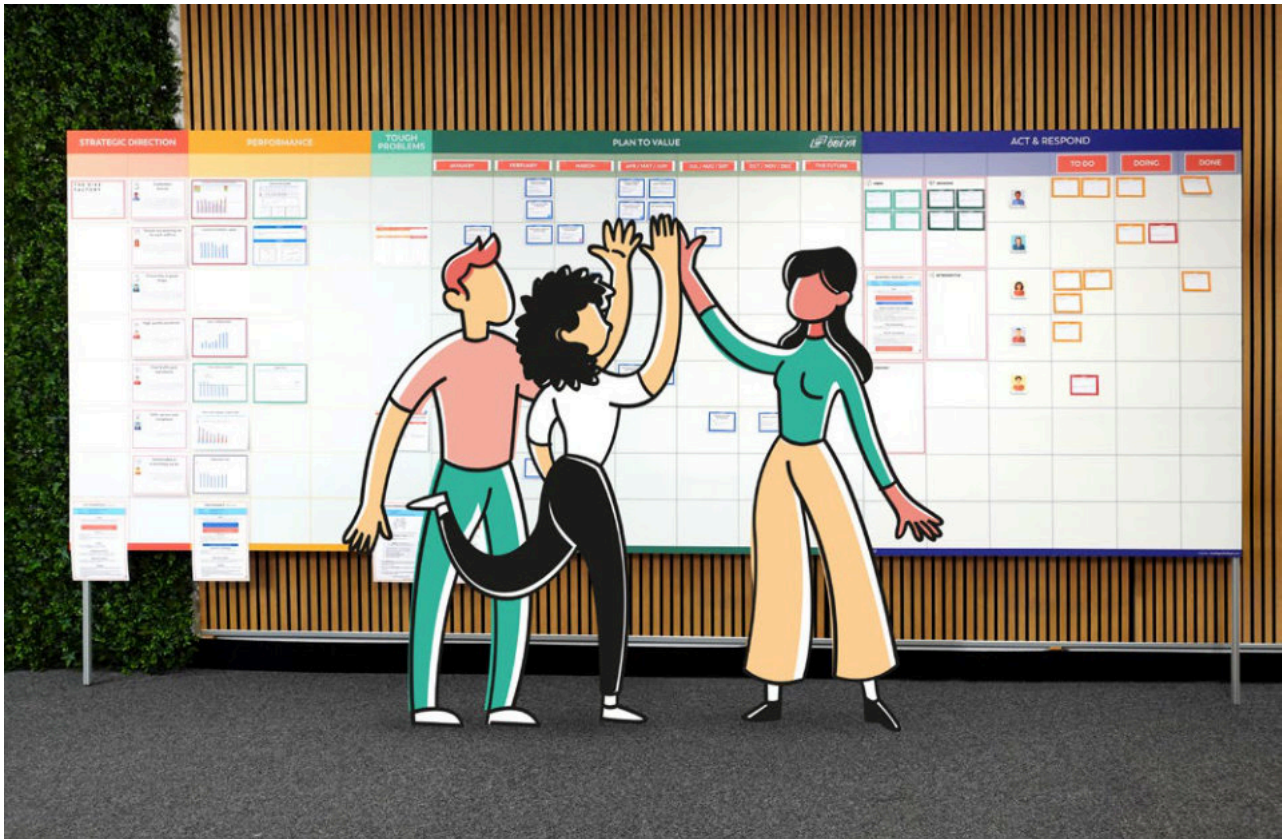
4 Invest in Training

Equip yourself and your team with the necessary skills through LWO training programs, ensuring a solid foundation for success.

5 Find a Skilled Coach or Trainer

Partner with a coach or trainer who possesses deep knowledge and practical experience with the methodology to guide your implementation effectively.

Start unlocking your potential right now



Embrace Leading with Obeya to navigate the challenges of modern management, fostering a culture of transparency, alignment, and efficiency within your organization. Begin your journey today and unlock the full potential of your team and your leadership capabilities.

Become a member of the Leading with Obeya network for free and get instant access to:

- ✓ **More effective meetings**
- ✓ **Virtual Obeya demo**
- ✓ **Monthly Obeya dojo**

Visit www.leadingwithobeya.com for more info.