



meet gilles

Get to know
the expert in
Lean Construction
Gilles Kartheuser



COP FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Each month your Construction Community of Practice portraits an inspiring professional. Meet today the Lean Construction Expert, Gilles Kartheuser!

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What is your current role and what project are you currently working on?

Currently, I am giving webinars for the Belgian Construction Confederation on "how to effectively organize the safe reopening of construction worksites after the covid19 crisis". I have started my career as a Lean and Management Consultant at Improof Solutions and after some successful experiences with clients in the construction industry, I suggested them to create an entity dedicated to the implementation of Lean and Operational Excellence in this sector which we finally launched in October 2019. We help big contractors' groups such as Eiffage or Willemen to implement Lean Construction but we are also targeting the all construction life-cycle from design to delivery and including sub-contractors and material suppliers. For example, we have worked with a carpentry - there it was a mix with Lean Manufacturing because the production chain has to fit specific projects. We even worked with a shipyard!

In the Pipeline

GILLES KARTHEUSER
CO-FOUNDER OF IMPROOF
CONSTRUCTIONS

Master Degree in Business Engineering and Executive Master in Real Estate, Solvay Brussels School
Founder and Vice President of the Solvay Brussels School Student Entrepreneurs Club



Project
Management
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Belgium



▼ Best Practices

What best practices are essential in construction according to you?

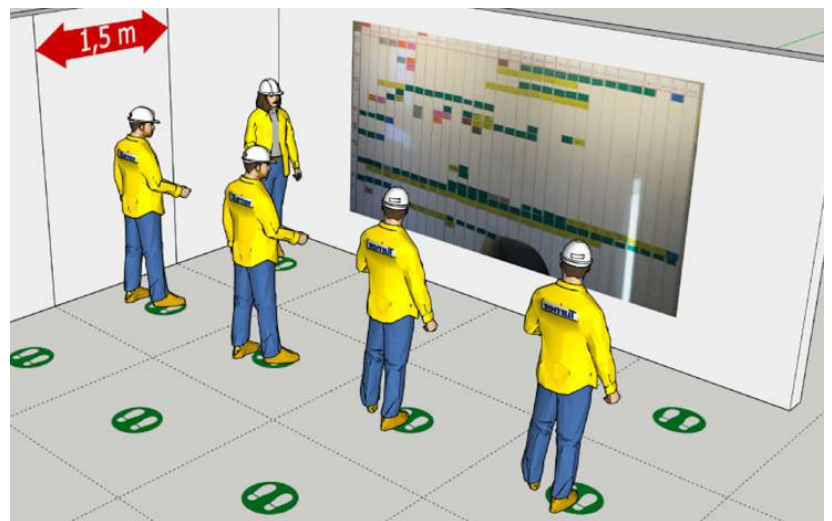
My favorite topics are: breaking the silos, teamwork and anticipation! I see a lot of conflictual relations and frustration on worksites because of the way construction projects are settled contractually and stakeholders onboarded. There is no real sense of common good. Despite the legal framework – for example the mandatory separation between the architect and the general contractor – it is necessary to remove the barriers and get people working together as one team to create a good workplace for everybody and work for a common goal, e.g. the Client' satisfaction. In addition, anticipation and preparation are essential to build up a trouble-free environment.



▼ Challenges

What are your main daily challenges?

My main challenge is to create a mass-movement and a structural change in Belgium towards Lean Construction. I am fully convinced of the potential benefits and I have a clear vision for it but it is an ongoing effort. Each company I help is another small stone to build a long-term impact. Therefore it is important to share knowledge and experience through webinars or social media.



▼ Lessons Learned

What are the last two lessons you have learned in your job?

Don't overengineer the system! Some might be reluctant to Lean but it simply start with no-nonsense. Don't be afraid by the big concepts; it just needs to get into it with small very practical things. What is crucial is to start early to install good practices from the beginning. With small things you can already have a big impact but it all relies on the people!

Unlike in the industry where you can also focus on optimizing the machinery, a construction site is all about the people! The key here is teamwork. You need to get people embracing the methodology and working together as early as possible. I am satisfied when I manage to convince someone to jump in because I know this person will work on other projects and will promote the methodology to others.

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Gilles Kartheuser, Lean Construction Expert

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The future

What will be the future of construction according to you?

On the short-term, following the covid19 crisis, construction companies will have to restart their activities in a safe and efficient way and it could be very beneficial for them to use this opportunity to set up Lean Construction methodologies on their worksites because they are precisely designed to manage critical situations.

On the longer-term, the construction will always be a steady sector like Food but the sector cannot continue as it always did historically. If we compare the productivity in the industry and in the construction, we see that the industrial sector has been through a lot of changes unlike construction. To ensure our competitiveness and a sustainable long-term development, we need to succeed in changing the way we think, in challenging the status quo and establish new practices. And things start to move. I have talked to architects who are turning to 100% BIM design! They are visionaries testing the waters but I think that at a certain point there won't be no other choice anymore than coming on board because the sector is under competitiveness and resources pressure. Construction cannot be business-as-usual anymore. We need to reflect on Lean, BIM, prefab,... for our sector to be future-proofed.

▼ Career

What piece of advice would you give to the young generation?

It only takes a few months to fall into bad habits and go with the flow so my advice would be to not hesitate to challenge the status quo and to experiment and think outside the box!