

Five Maps for Your Journey

The Jim Benson “I Wanna be Lean” reading list.

Pontification

Lean at its core is not about tact time, throughput, push, pull, A3s, or even Kaizen. Those are the tools or byproducts of thoughtful management. Lean, at its heart, is about thoughtful management of the business, of the teams, and of ourselves.

We want to see what is happening, understand how we and our colleagues best collaborate, solve problems, make good decisions, and have an insatiable desire to be better. We want to be curious ourselves and inspire curiosity in others. We want to question today in the service of a better tomorrow. We want to make sure our culture is one of learning, creation, safety, and ethics. We want to go home knowing we’ve done a good job and that tomorrow is another opportunity for the same.

This Lean reading list, therefore, steps outside the obvious texts and provides offerings with a foundation for these critical skills. I have chosen five books per area of expertise I believe a real Lean Leader or simply a healthy resident of the 21st century would have.

I find with increasing dismay that our focus to re-invigorate STEM learning has made the pendulum swing away from the study of what it means to actually understand human systems. In order to be Lean, you must understand people. They are in every system you make and they let you know quickly how inane the system you are foisting on them is.

I urge you to engage in learning while reading. Write in your books, *extensively*. We authors put those unprinted edges in there for you to annotate – to extend – to rationalize – to learn – to argue – to participate. No writing = no learning. Be bold, get a pen, dare to learn, write in the damn books.

If you find these books helpful, the best payment to me would be to share them with others – with this purpose: to better understand how we all work together and how we need each other. Please do let me know if they were helpful via email or twitter (@ourfounder).

Lastly, always, when you feel on the verge of a solution, ask one last question: *What if that solution were not possible, what would I do then?*

Thank you for being interested in making a better world.

Jim Benson
Flying from Seattle to Nashville
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Map A: People are People

1. [Man's Search for Meaning](#)
– Viktor Frankl
2. [Hocus Pocus](#)
– Kurt Vonnegut
3. [The Five People You Meet in Heaven](#)
– Mitch Albom
4. [The Left Hand of Darkness](#)
– Ursula K. LeGuin
5. [I Wonder as I Wander & The Big Sea](#)
– Langston Hughes

*“MANY PEOPLE NEED
DESPERATELY TO RECEIVE
THIS MESSAGE: 'I FEEL AND
THINK MUCH AS YOU DO,
CARE ABOUT MANY OF THE
THINGS YOU CARE ABOUT,
ALTHOUGH MOST PEOPLE DO
NOT CARE ABOUT THEM. YOU
ARE NOT ALONE.”*

— KURT VONNEGUT, TIMEQUAKE

*“ENJOYMENT APPEARS AT
THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN
BOREDOM AND ANXIETY,
WHEN THE CHALLENGES ARE
JUST BALANCED WITH THE
PERSON'S CAPACITY TO ACT.”*
— MIHALY CSIKSZENTMIHALYI,
FLOW

Map B: The Psychology of Human Endeavor

1. [Flow](#)
– Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
2. [Thinking Fast and Slow](#)
– Kahneman and Tversky
3. [Snakes in Suits](#)
– Babiak and Hare
4. [The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces](#)
– William H. Whyte
5. [Brain Rules](#) – John Medina

Map C: The Systems of Better

1. [Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth](#)
– Bucky
2. [The Souls of Black Folk](#)
– W. E. B. DuBois
3. [Governing the Commons](#)
– Elinor Ostrom
4. [Universe in a Single Atom](#)
– Dalai Lama
5. [28 Barbary Lane](#)
– Armistead Maupin

*“THE ACQUISITION OF
MENTAL SKILLS IS A MATTER
OF VOLITION AND FOCUSED
EFFORT; IT IS NOT A SPECIAL
MYSTICAL GIFT GIVEN TO THE
FEW.”*

*— DALAI LAMA XIV,
THE UNIVERSE IN A SINGLE ATOM*

*“A CERTAIN TYPE OF
PERFECTION CAN ONLY BE
REALIZED THROUGH A
LIMITLESS ACCUMULATION
OF THE IMPERFECT.”*
– HARUKI MURAKAMI,
KAFKA ON THE SHORE

Map D: The Systems of Not Better

1. [48 Laws of Power](#)
– Robert Greene
2. [Junky](#)
– William S Burroughs
3. [Animal Farm](#)
– George Orwell
4. [Straight Man](#)
– Richard Russo
5. [Kafka on the Shore](#)
– Haruki Murakami

Map E: Moral Quandaries Lived and Explained

1. [Shadow of the Hegemon](#)
– Orson Scott Card
2. [Off the Road](#)
– Carolyn Cassady
3. [The Color Purple](#)
– Alice Walker
4. [Drawdown](#)
– Paul Hawken
5. [Being Nixon](#)
– Evan Thomas

*“I THINK US HERE TO WONDER, MYSELF.
TO WONDER. TO ASK. AND THAT IN
WONDERING BOUT THE BIG THINGS
AND ASKING BOUT THE BIG THINGS,
YOU LEARN ABOUT THE LITTLE ONES,
ALMOST BY ACCIDENT. BUT YOU NEVER
KNOW NOTHING MORE ABOUT THE BIG
THINGS THAN YOU START OUT WITH.
THE MORE I WONDER, THE MORE I
LOVE.”*
– ALICE WALKER,
THE COLOR PURPLE



The Compass: Walt Kelly

1. [Pogo – Bona Fide Balderdash](#) – Walt Kelly

The More Traditional Resource List You'd Expect to See (The one we give after classes)

Books & Concepts

Ackoff, Russell. *The Art of Problem Solving Accompanied by Ackoff's Fables*

Argyris, Chris. *Teaching Smart People How to Learn* and *On Double Loop Learning*

Benson, Jim. *Why Plans Fail: Cognitive Bias, Decision Making, and Your Business*

Bungay, Stephen. *The Art of Action*

Cirillo, Francisco. Pomodoro Technique → <http://pomodorotechnique.com/>

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*

Deming, W. Edwards. Videos --> <http://www.demingvideos.com>

Duhigg, Charles. *The Power of Habit*

Kahneman, Daniel. *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (on cognitive bias)

Newport, Cal. *Deep Work. Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*

Rock, David. *Your Brain at Work*

Schein, Edgar. *Humble Inquiry*

Snowden, Dave. Cynefin in depth → <http://cognitive-edge.com/blog/type/cynefin>