

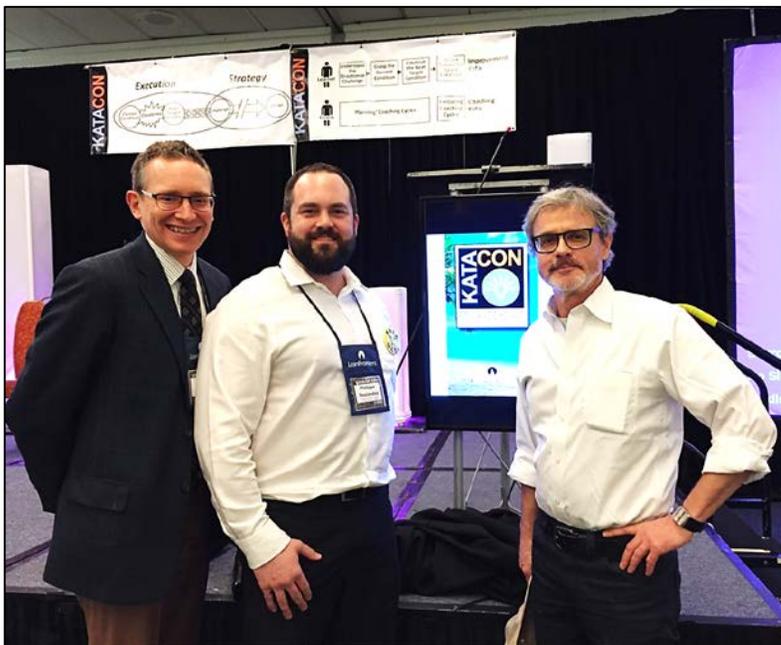
KATA Curious? What is Toyota KATA? ***A special report from the first ever KATA Summit***

by Tracy Defoe, President, TLF The Learning Factor

In his book *Toyota KATA*, Mike Rother sets out how to manage people for improvement. He asserts that learning and practising a scientific mindset in the structure of a routine or 'KATA' will change your view of management, teamwork, coaching, education and what it takes to fuel a culture of improvement.

People around the world who are implementing and practising the two KATA routines Rother describes as the Improvement KATA (IK), and the Coaching KATA (CK), call themselves "KATA Geeks." In February 223 people, KATA curious and KATA Geeks, gathered in Fort Lauderdale Florida for the first ever KATA Summit conference, also known as KATACon.

Among the few Canadians in the crowd were these two Quebecers, one curious, and one KATA Geek, who offered their thoughts on the KATA Summit.



Sylvain Landry (Left) and Phillipe Deslandes with Toyota KATA author and self-described 'KATA Geek' Mike Rother (Right)

"The conference gave a number of clues on how to truly build a learning organization through process improvements and people development," said Sylvain Landry Professor at the École des Hautes Études Commerciales de Montréal, (HEC Montréal) the independent affiliated business school of the Université de Montréal.

Phillipe Deslandes is a KATA practitioner in the healthcare sector, CSSS Haut-Richelieu Le Centre de santé et de services sociaux. He said, "It felt great to be a KATA Geek and meet people passionate about the IK/CK approach. I counted people from at least eight different countries. It was a unique opportunity to learn tips to improve myself as a coach."



Dane Olav Røe and Tracy Defoe from Vancouver BC practise coaching and improvement KATAs.

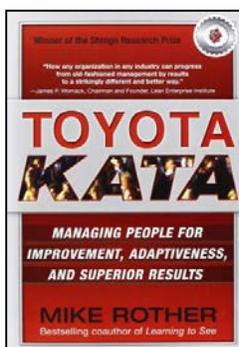
At KATACon I had the opportunity to learn KATA in a group and for a while act as coach to Danish LEAN Consultant Olav Røe. Over the course of a few hours we tackled a challenge and worked to a target condition through rapid improvement experiments. As documented in this photo, we wore the reminder bibs extolling us to ‘Stick to the Script’ and “Answer the Questions!”

Why did Røe travel all the way from Denmark to KATACon? His organization is on a LEAN transformation journey and he was curious “to explore how we could utilize these concepts and models in our LEAN efforts.”

I have been learning about KATA but I hadn’t tried it before KATACon. I have visited companies doing the IK and CK, complementing and strengthening their LEAN improvements by developing people through the structure of daily routine. For me, when people want to demonstrate that good managers are teachers who use question to teach people how to think about problems, I am there.

Why should an organization consider KATA? KATA is a form of Leader Standard Work that managers can use to develop and coach the people they lead. If the hoped for LEAN transformation appears to stall; if it begins to appear that supervisors or leaders are an obstacle to innovation; and it is difficult to find ways to really engage employees – applying the discipline associated with the Improvement KATA and Coaching KATA has turned things around.

Among other great skills, you and your team will begin to tap into the focus and brain power of employees. That becomes visible when you realize you don’t have to have all the answers. You will know when to ask questions and when to get out of the way while learners run an experiment to see what happens if they try a carefully planned, but quickly executed, change in their process. It will be easier to see when folks consistently show up with the right tools.



Still curious about KATA? I know I am, even as I start to learn and practise. The KATA community was very generous with their video clips, slides and laminated KATA cards. You can find out more about everything KATA from Mike Rother’s web site. There are lots of free resources and listings for upcoming training at KATA Skills Camp and when KATACon 2016 is announced, you’ll read about it there. You will also find KATA Groups on Linked In. Change takes work. New habits take effort. **And turning the right habits into KATAs can change the culture of your workplace for the better.**

<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mrother/Homepage.html>

ATJ thanks Tracy Defoe for her summary of the first KATACon in Fort Lauderdale last month, and for helping define this emerging approach. Tracy is an adult educator dedicated to turning workplaces into learning places – free of boredom and waste. You may have noted this from her work at Teleflex covered in the last ATJ issue. She works across Canada and can be reached at her website: www.thelearningfactor.ca or at 604-730-0331.