

## **GA 013 | Bryan Glenn**

Announcer: You're listening to episode 13, with Bryan Glenn.

Announcer: [background music] Welcome to the Gemba Academy Podcast. The show that's focused on helping individuals and companies achieve breakthrough results using the same continuous improvement principles leveraged by companies such as Toyota, Del Monte, and the US Department of Defense. Now, here's your host, Ron Pereira.

Ron Pereira: Hey there. Welcome to another episode of the Gemba Academy Podcast. Hopefully you're having an incredible day and week. As always, thank you so much for taking time out of your day to listen to what we're up to here on the podcast. And also with our videos on Gemba Academy. We truly appreciate each and every one of you.

Today, I'm really excited to welcome Bryan Glenn to the show. Bryan is the Director of Purchasing and Inventory Services at West Texas A&M, which is located in Canyon, Texas. This was definitely a fun and very unique episode to record since it was the first podcast interview that's also being produced as a video.

In fact, Bryan visited us here in our studio in Keller, Texas. We decided to run an experiment to see how producing both a video and podcast at the same time works out. We definitely want to hear your feedback. Needless to say, if you want to check the video out, please head over to [gembapodcast.com/13](http://gembapodcast.com/13) where we'll have this interview available in both audio and video format.

In any event, during this episode Bryan and I discuss how West Texas A&M is practicing continuous improvement to improve the way the university operates. In full disclosure, West Texas A&M is a long-time Gemba Academy customer, so we do also talk about how they're leveraging our training videos.

I do want to thank Bryan and West Texas A&M for their business as well as their willingness to share their story with the world. It's our hope that it will inspire other higher education institutions, and really anyone who works in a service-focused industry.

Again, show notes in the video version of this episode can be found over at [gembapodcast.com/13](http://gembapodcast.com/13). Enough from me, let's get to the show.

Hey, there! Welcome back. I am here with one of Gemba Academy's customers, Bryan Glenn. Bryan, thank you so much for coming. What we're doing here folks is, Bryan was in town, and so we said, "Come on over to the studios here."

We're going to make a video here, obviously, but we're also going to try to convert this into a podcast. If you are listening to this through our podcast, you can actually come over to the Gemba Academy website and watch us on video as well. Brian, especially, is pretty handsome, so it's probably better to look at the video than the podcast.

First of all, seriously, thank you for coming. Tell us a little bit about yourself and your school?

Bryan Glenn: I'm with West Texas A&M University. We're located in Canyon, Texas. We have been around for 103 years.

Ron: 103?

Bryan: 103. We joined the A&M system in 1995. My real job is Director of Purchasing and Inventory Services. I was tapped about two years ago to roll out Lean Six Sigma and to hire out across the campus.

Ron: That's great. How long have you guys been a customer of Gemba Academy?

Bryan: A little over 18 months, almost two years.

Ron: I don't know if you know the story, but you were telling us, before the video started that your assistant said, "Hey you got to go check out this Gemba Academy, is that right?"

Bryan: Actually it was the the president's assistant, and our CEO. We were trying to find the perfect training tools and we couldn't. She called me up one day and she said, "Hey, go check Gemba Academy and I did and I thought, "Man, this is perfect."

Ron: Thank you to the young lady.

Bryan: Her name is Tracy Joss.

Ron: Tracy, thank you. [laughs]

Bryan: She will see this.

Ron: That's great. What we'd like to do, Bryan, is start off with a quotation that inspires you, either leadership, Lean Six Sigma, doesn't matter. What inspires you, what quotation?

Bryan: One of Deming's, "It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory." You guys use it. I really like that one.

Ron: Why do you think that's so powerful?

Bryan: When you look at Lean Six Sigma, Lean, our Six Sigma, it's about constant change. If you're not changing, you're dying. You have to change and evolve.

Ron: I love that. What we're going to do here, Bryan, is we're just going to talk a little bit about your program at West Texas A&M. It's not meant to be a commercial for Gemba Academy, but obviously Gemba Academy plays a role in it. Tell us a little bit about your program in general. What are you guys doing? How are using Lean and Six Sigma in the higher education format?

Bryan: I sent a letter on email out to the campus-wide at the start of each semester asking staff and faculty who would like to sign up. So far, I have had 18 Green Belt candidates complete the course. We meet Wednesday afternoon for two hours and use the Gemba Academy training tools.

Then, we have several process improvement exercises we have developed and also a DOE exercise at the end. Once they complete Gemba Academy they have to take a test and pass it, and then they have to come to me with a project. They have to complete the Green Belt project using Six Sigma.

Once they complete the project, then they are ordered a Green Belt. We also are working with developing a Black Belt program and again, we're using your resources to do so.

Ron: One thing that I want to point out is something that we talk to a lot of our customers about, is that Gemba Academy, we do offer our own certification program. We'll mentor the person and so forth, but we are extremely excited when people are doing what you're doing, which is using our content, and then using your own internal experts, such as yourself and other folks, that are experienced in this kind of stuff, and running your own certification program.

I think that's fantastic. I'd love to hear of more companies doing this. Sure, we'd be happy to have people go through our certification program, but we don't exist for certification, right?

Bryan: Right.

Ron: We exist to train people and to help organizations grow.

Bryan: Part of the process, once they are certified, the President/CEO wants to sign off on that certificate because he has total buy-in to what we're doing. You have to have that top-down trickle.

Ron: That's powerful. Let's dig into it a little bit, though. Give us an example of one project that you can think of that was done and was successful.

Bryan: Being in the university, we have a lot of student workers. We got to examining what was going on, on hiring the student workers. It was taking anywhere up to 90 days to get a student worker onto payroll. Part of the reason, the approval form would sit in somebody's email box, or on somebody's desk.

Once we started using your tools, we found out that the piece of paperwork actually traveled a half a mile across campus. We used the process, we had the student employment people, and the payroll people meet and we came up with a process improvement. The form is now electronic, and it's down to three days, which was the target our customers, the students, and the hiring managers wanted.

Ron: What was it before, again?

Bryan: Up to 90 days.

Ron: 90 to three.

Bryan: 90 to three, also made us compliant with federal and state regulations on having the paperwork in place.

Ron: That was a Green Belt project?

Bryan: Yes sir.

Ron: Walk us through that project. What kind of tools did they use, mapping, spaghetti diagrams, things like that?

Bryan: We started off with values training, then we process mapped. They actually walked the paperwork through.

Ron: Became the thing, right?

Bryan: They became the thing to see how long it took. The two departments just sitting down and talking, they understood that there were things that were not needed and not necessary. The huge factor was no one knew what the student, or the internal customer expected, and they were blown away at how three to five days was it.

Minor soft savings was \$100 per hire. Hard savings, those students could go to work right then, and not just wait, and wait, and the semester is over and they can't go to work.

Ron: How do you guys handle the whole savings things? I understand that you look at both hard savings and soft savings? Talk a little bit about that.

Bryan: Since we're a service industry and most of our customers are students, we're looking at increasing customer satisfaction. We want the students to have an enjoyable experience, and recommend us to others to go there, that we get what they need, it's difficult on the soft saving part because we're mainly dealing with customer satisfaction. There are minor savings, but we're not saving millions of dollars. We never will.

Ron: I don't think that's your objective.

Bryan: That's not our objective. It's to make students want to come to West Texas A&M. We want to understand what they need.

Ron: Which by the way, ultimately, probably is worth millions in the long run.

Bryan: Yes.

Ron: You know what I mean? You can't measure that, necessarily.

Bryan: I would like to take credit for our enrollment increase this past semester. We say that it was because we streamlined on some processes, but I can't. You never know.

Ron: Over the course of the next 20 years, it's obvious that these things are going to be impacting that.

Bryan: We had a project that looked at residential housing. What students wanted, to find a dorm room. Before, it was all a paper process and it was very cumbersome. Through the process, we said, "Why don't we go to a software company?" They can see the rooms online, and they can register online.

It tells them what paperwork they're missing, and they're not waiting on correspondence going back and forth. It's increased the process, and made the students a lot happier.

Ron: Give us one more example.

Bryan: One more example is we print vouchers every year, and each voucher is a different color so we understand what year it was paid in. There's a color code key there.

Ron: Vouchers, explain vouchers.

Bryan: A voucher is a check, a form of a check. The business office would have to order all this colored paper, and they may or may not use it in that given fiscal year, so they would be stuck with all this paper. We experimented with single printing of a voucher on one piece of paper, and it worked.

They pass the State of Texas, and met all the criteria, so they print them as they need them now. That's about a \$12,000 savings.

Ron: Nice. Lots of success, but not to put you on the spot here, but have there been any struggles or failures?

Bryan: There have been several failures. We were trying to develop an e-procurement system, and we were about to roll it out, and all of a sudden the system office said, "Nope, we're going to do our own," so we had to stop that one. There have been others where we get started, and we look at the scope and we say, "Man, we don't want to boil the ocean. We need to back off and look at something a little different."

We had one transcript from students coming into the college, we had to actually break it off into several different sub-processes to get it fixed, but it worked in the end. The gentleman that was running that project, he was trained in the Navy on their Lean Six Sigma so he had a very good understanding of it.

Ron: Great. Last question for this section, Bryan, Gemba Academy, we get a lot of phone calls from a lot of different types of companies, and honestly there's a lot of higher education folks reaching out to us asking about how these things called Lean and Six Sigma can be applicable to their world.

What do you have to say to them? Are you a true believer for that Lean and Six Sigma should really be more involved in higher education process?

Bryan: Yes, definitely. Since introducing into higher ed two years ago, I have come across other institutions that are looking into creating a Lean Six Sigma program, are wanting to copy our model because they have seen the success.

The trouble is most of the Lean Six Sigma concepts have been built around manufacturing, and adapting them into the service environment. There's some changes and some alterations you have to make, but I'm a true believer that it can work in the service industry, and we have made proof of it.

Ron: Yes, that's fantastic. Let's now transition, Bryan into what we're calling the quick fire section of the podcast, but again, we're going to do this on video as well. The first question is in lean we talk a lot about respect for people. It's a key aspect of the whole lean body of knowledge. What does it mean to you, respect for people?

Bryan: When I conduct my Lean Six Sigma classes, that's one important point that I try to make to the trainees, is that people are not the problem, there's something else. You don't go identifying a single person and singling them out, and saying, "It's your fault. You're the problem." You have to have respect for the people.

That's something we've learned. We have to actually comfort people when we introduce a project that we're not going to take their job away from them. We are there to help them, and improve the way they do their job.

Ron: What's the best advice you've ever received, Bryan? Any advice.

Bryan: When I first started into the quality program, and that's why it gets me back to the Deming quote. If you stop changing, stop growing, and stop learning, you're dying. You see that around with companies all the time. They stick with, "This is the way we do it. It works, it's not broken, why fix it?" and they ignore what's going on around them.

Ron: I don't know if you have listened to them, the Matthew May podcast that we did, but when we did that we were talking about the story of ice. Matt was talking about how ice 1.0 was you had the lake around you, and that's how you got your ice when it froze.

Ice 2.0 the guys were hauling it around, and in ice 3.0 where there are factories and so forth. Problem was the guy that did ice 1.0 he wasn't involved in 2.0 because he was so enthralled with his 1.0 process. I think it's very similar to that, that we've got to keep our eyes open in moving forward, or you will perish, right, like that Deming says.

Bryan: Exactly. Just seeing it with the students, it's amazing.

Ron: Do you have any personal productivity habits, Bryan, that you think others might benefit from?

Bryan: I tend to Kaizen everything I do, including kitchen cabinets, the pots and pans, desks, my desk is that way. Once you are a part of Lean Six Sigma you think in that realm. Does that make sense?

Ron: Yes, I know! [laughs]

Bryan: I mean it's truly a different way of thinking and that's something I tell the trainees, you're going to start thinking a little differently. It's amazing. Once the light comes on...

Ron: Yes, you can't stop it.

Bryan: No, and you see them moving forward. You can tell the ones that get it.

Ron: I remember back when I worked in industry I visited a plant in Springville, Utah, I think that was the name of it. First, we were going to be running some events. We had a big quick changeover initiative where there were a lot of problems with changeover and these equipments.

The first event we did, oh my goodness, we had about 10 people arms crossed, and sour look on their faces, and by the end, they were totally on board. What happened was, the second and third time we came in there, we are walking through, and people were giving a dirty looks. We thought, oh great they hate us! But what it was, they were mad that we weren't working in their area that week. It was like wow, what a change! It didn't take long that they saw what was happening over here in these other areas, and they wanted some, right? So eventually, they got it as well.

Bryan: That environment has taken over at university also. I'll get phone calls, "Can you fix this? Can you get this done?" and people see things that they want to take care of. We had the boards outside the elevator telling who had what office, and they were the Old felt, whites, number type. Well, now we've gone to digital, and that was one of the phone calls I got is can you find somebody to fix these, get these up to date, become some of these departments don't even exist anymore.

Ron: Could you imagine that you would have had that two years ago? People calling you asking for improvements? That's incredible. Imagine what it's going to be like in five years if you guys keep going.

Bryan: Oh yeah,

Ron: It's going to be incredible.

Bryan: You can tell the culture has definitely taken root.

Ron: That's great. Bryan, if you could only recommend one book related to continuous improvement or leadership, what would it be and why?

Bryan: There is a book called "Lean Six Sigma for Service." The author is...

[crosstalk]

Ron: I think it's Michael George. We'll look it up and put it in the show notes.

Bryan: Very good if you're looking at introducing Lean Six Sigma in service. Not only does it cover higher ed, it covers hospitals, and even the office environment.

Ron: Great, well we'll link up to that one. Last question, here's the situation. You've been hired as the general manager at a company, and this company, Bryan, is struggling. They've got bad quality, bad productivity, morale is terrible. It's just a mess. And you were hired, because they heard how incredible you did at West Texas A&M. West Texas A&M, he's not going to leave, this is just a story.

[laughter]

Ron: This is a hypothetical story. But you've been hired, because of your past results. As it turns out, the CEO has giving you full operational, and P&L control. You are running the ship, OK? What would you do your first week and why?

Bryan: One of my other favorite books is the “Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun.”

[laughter]

Bryan: It talks in there about team-building,

Ron: OK.

Bryan: You can't go in and massively change things at once. You've got people that are experienced that know their job. There may be some underlying factors for why they're not happy. First, get to know what's going on, understand the situation. Use some of Six Sigma's Lean tools. Hopefully they have a program in place already. If not, use those tools to understand what's going on. You're not going to quick fix it at once. That's going to be impossible. It's going to take time, and it's going to take learning. That's what I would do.

[crosstalk]

Bryan: First you've got to get an understanding and implement something to initiate change to turn things around, and stay the course.

Ron: Yeah, so the last question, just kind of off the standard work here, but what's next for West Texas A&M? What's on the Lean and Six Sigma front?

Bryan: We have a candidate that wants to become a black belt, and we're developing a black belt program. She came to me and asked what needed to be done, and I said go use Gemba's checklist. It's perfect. She's working on ten projects, and she got the tools and information back using your check list. Hopefully, I'm wrapping up next week the next class that will graduate, and then in the fall we will offer it again. Hopefully I will have 15 like I did the first time around.

Ron: Nice, so the last thing is, go ahead and just wrap up with some final words of wisdom just for anyone that may be in the service industry, and then tell people how they could connect with you for social media, LinkedIn, Twitter. What's the best way to get a hold of you?

Bryan: What was the first thing?

Ron: Final words of wisdom.

Bryan: Final words of wisdom. Don't reinvent the wheel. You guys have the package. It's easy, it's presentable, it's affordable. The students like it. Take it and adapt it to your own format, your own style. It's real easy, very simple.

Ron: Are you on LinkedIn?

[crosstalk]

Bryan: Yeah, I'm Bryan Glenn on LinkedIn. You can also go to [wtamu.edu](http://wtamu.edu).

Ron: Say that again, w...

Bryan: [wtamu.edu](http://wtamu.edu), and in our search, we have a Lean Six Sigma page that has all the information, all of our projects that we worked on and how we used DMAIC Model. You can just search for my name, Bryan Glenn, B-r-y-a-n G-l-e-n-n, and it will pull up my contact information there.

Ron: Great. Is it OK for other folks contact you?

Bryan: Yeah. People can contact me who want to know how we're doing it. If they need ideas or help, I'd be glad to.

Ron: Great.

Bryan: Networking is also key in this, because other people have other ideas and listening to how they have input is key.

Ron: Not to put you on the spot, but man we'd love to pack up these cameras and head on over to West Texas A&M and do a Gemba Live episode one day. So let's talk with the powers that be...

[background music]

Bryan: Come on.

Ron: ...and make that happen.

Bryan: I've got people that would love to do it.

Ron: Fantastic! Thank you for coming in.

Bryan: Thank you sir, no problem.

Ron: Be well.

[background music]