

# Lean Production and Leadership – Operational Excellence in Japan

Nothing is more inspirational than successful role models.



Illustration: © Roman Ditzer, 2019

**Impact of the Learning Journeys**  
**Results of the Online Surveys 2015 and 2019**  
Lean Production and Leadership –  
Operational Excellence in Japanese Companies

October 2019

Dr Roman Ditzer

# Online Survey 2015

## Objective and questions

We wanted to know more out about the long-term impact of our Learning Journeys to Japan so we conducted a simple survey. The aim was also to find out the extent to which the inspiration from Japan has led to behavioural changes and improvements in daily business back in Germany. In the final analysis, our Japan seminars are based on one fundamental principle: **Ultimately, the only thing that counts is what is then implemented in your own company.**

The survey consisted of nine questions, formulated in an open manner to ensure that the answers were neither suggestive nor prescriptive. We were eager to receive honest feedback and clear statements. The survey also included some follow-up questions where we asked for further details or examples.

We contacted **120 participants** of our Learning Journeys who travelled with us from 2012 to 2015; **66 participants\*** completed the survey in November 2015. **This equates to a response rate of 55 %.**

*\*Some questions could be skipped without being answered, hence the total number of answers not adding up to 66.*

# Online Survey 2019

## Objective and questions

Again we contacted **146 participants** of our Learning Journeys who travelled with us from 2016 to 2019. **51 participants\*** completed the survey in 2019. **This equates to a response rate of 35 %.**

Thus the **results are representative and robust.**

*\* Some questions could be skipped without being answered, hence the total number of answers not adding up to 15.*

# Question 1

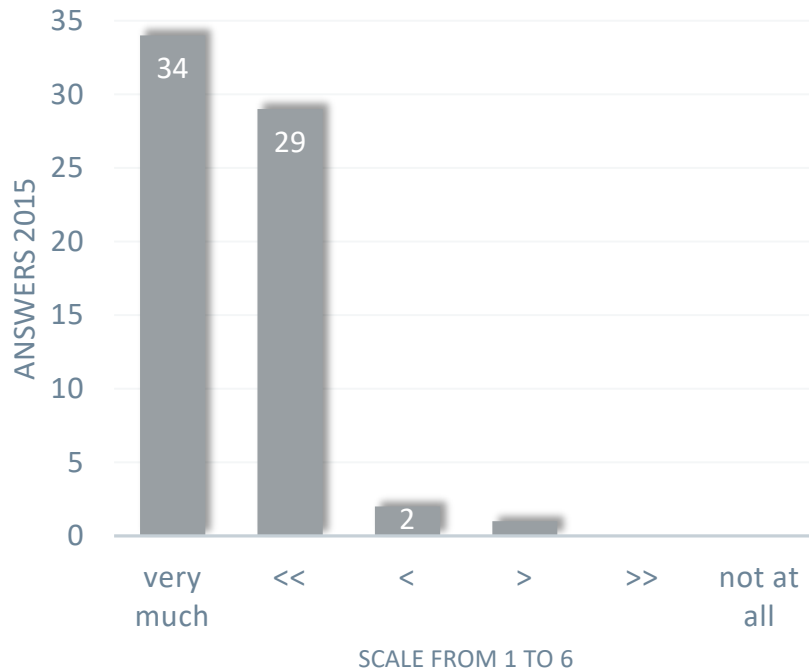
Questions about the impact of the Learning Journey

**Looking back, would you say that the Learning Journey was worthwhile for your own personal development?**

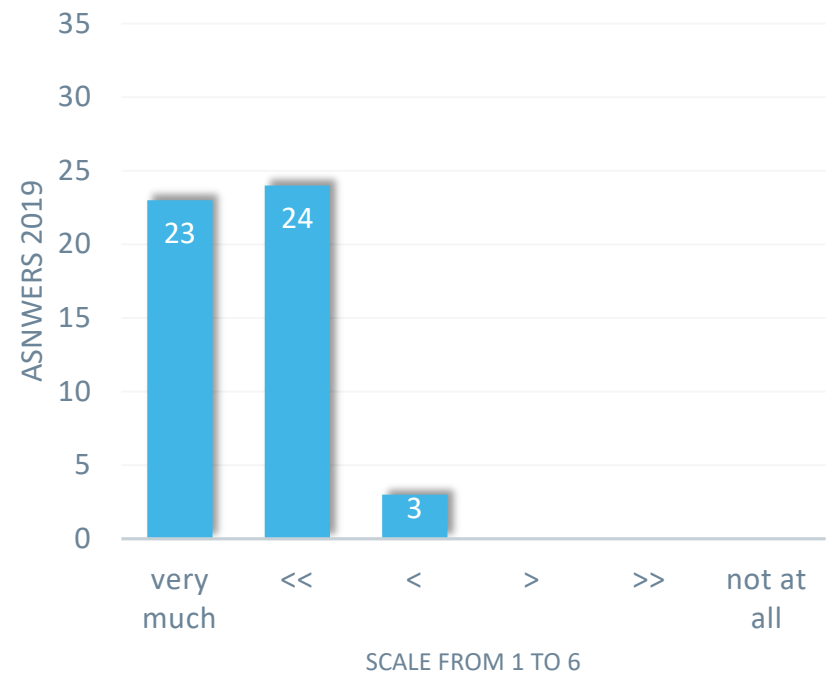
# Was the Learning Journey worthwhile?

Answers 2015 and 2019

On a scale from 1 (very worthwhile) to 6 (not worthwhile at all) ...



**2015** (66 answers)  
Average score: **1.5**



**2019** (50 answers)  
Average score: **1.6**

## Question 2

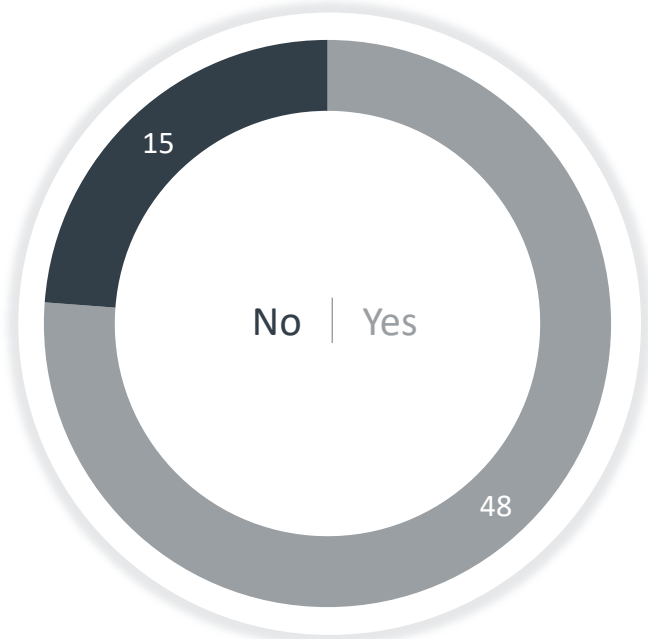
Questions about the impact of the Learning Journey

**Did the experience in Japan change your leadership style?**

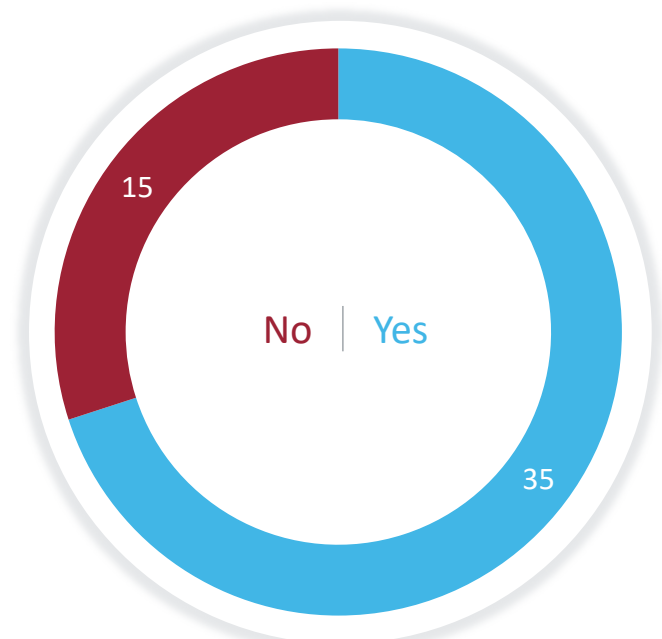
# Has your leadership style changed?

Answers 2015 and 2019

## Did the experience in Japan change your leadership style?



**2015** (63 answers)  
76 % of participants reported  
a change in behaviour.



**2019** (50 answers)  
70 % of participants reported  
a change in behaviour.



# Has your leadership style changed?

Follow-up question

**If yes, to what extent?**

# Has your leadership style changed?

Answers 2019

**"After the trip, my appreciation of the employee has changed. What you invest here, you end up getting back twofold.**

**It also showed me what advantages a consistent implementation according to a uniform philosophy entails."**

# Has your leadership style changed?

Answers 2019

**"Communication process has been improved – coaching and leadership, our method, department (time analysis, ...) and lean projects – general project management for project managers – or how can new facilities be developed with people at the centre? (We have developed a new production line internally with the goal: "Best machine for people" → the result is wonderful!)."**

# Has your leadership style changed?

Answers 2019

**"I took valuable learnings with me and have identified personal action items based on this learning. This will definitely lead to some impetus on my leadership style. However, to say that the visit has changed my leadership style would go too far (and in my opinion cannot be expected)"**

**"Less deciding on my own → more trusting of employees and motivating them!"**

# Has your leadership style changed?

Answers 2019

**"More pressure on *pokayoke* and process improvement."**

**"I try to lead more by using questions, i. e. to ask my employees and colleagues questions in such a way that they can find the answers themselves, instead of simply giving the – from my perspective – correct solution."**

# Has your leadership style changed?

Answers 2019

**"To greet every employee personally every morning."**

**"Since Japan, I have placed much more emphasis on visualisation and transparency of results. *Go and See* is more important to me than before."**

**"More discipline, more 'leading by example', more 'go to *genba*', fewer automation requests"**

# Has your leadership style changed?

Answers 2019

**"The manager's task is to take care of the employees and to use and promote the potential of the employees: Employees take care of their worries and are given the freedom and, if necessary, the means to remedy them".**

## Question 3

Questions about the cost-benefit ratio

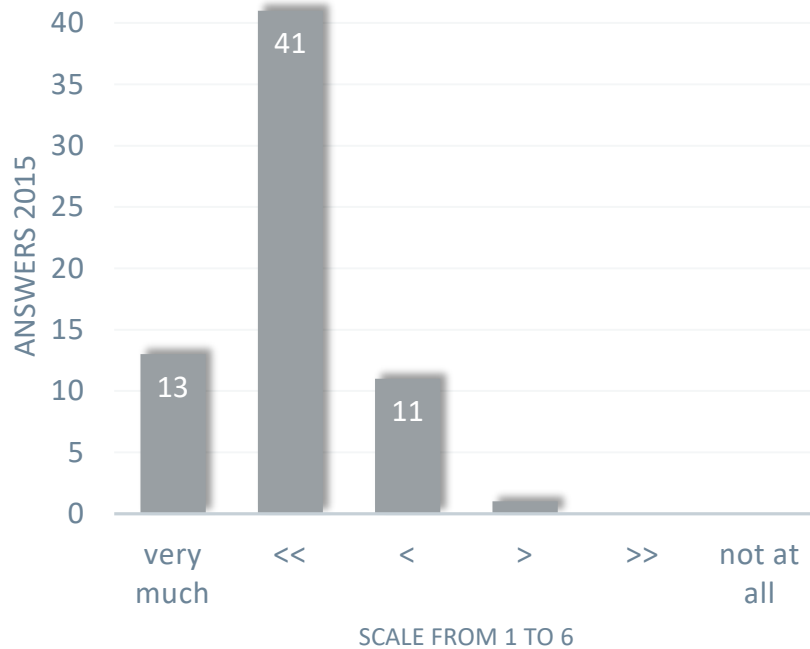
**In retrospect, would you say that the Learning Journey was worthwhile for the company that sent you?**



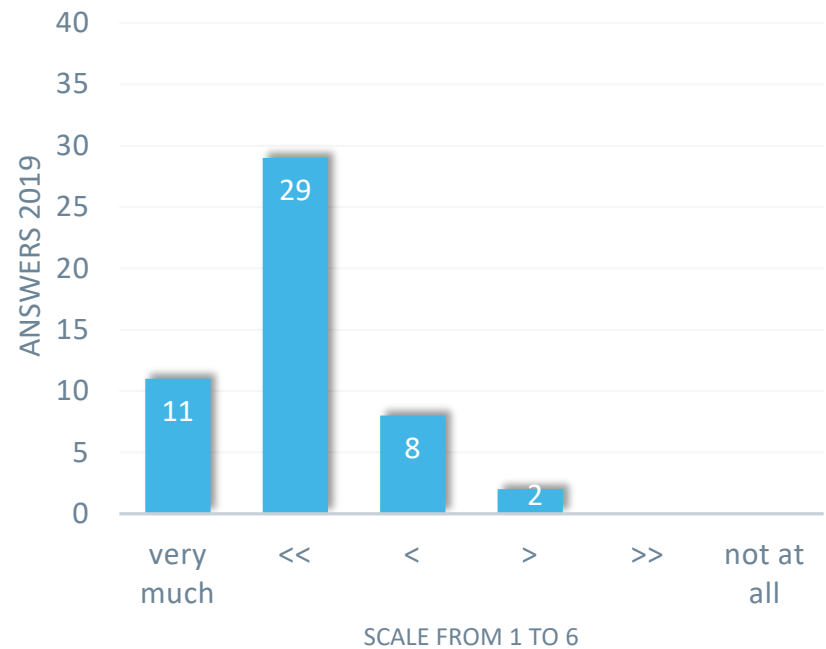
# ... worthwhile for your company?

Answers 2015 and 2019

On a scale from 1 (very worthwhile) to 6 (not worthwhile at all) ...



**2015** (66 answers)  
Average score: **2.0**



**2019** (50 answers)  
Average score: **2.0**

## Question 4

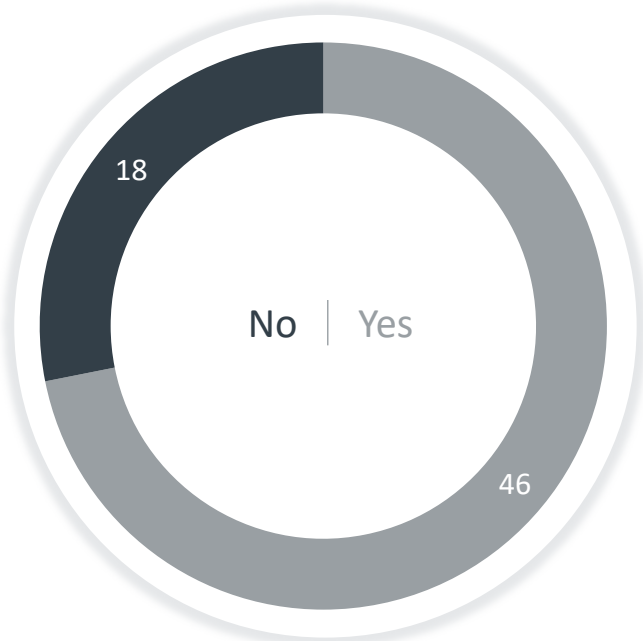
Questions about the impact of the Learning Journey

**Are there any specific improvement measures which can be traced back to the ideas from the Learning Journey?**

## ... specific improvement measures?

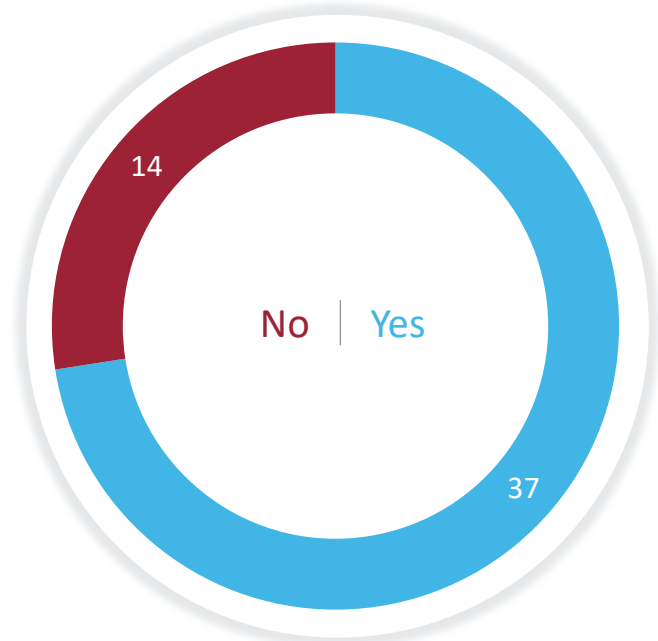
Answers 2015 and 2019

### Did the Journey lead to any specific improvement measures?



**2015** (64 answers)

The Learning Journey led to improvement measures for **72 %** of the participants.



**2019** (51 answers)

The Learning Journey led to improvement measures for **73 %** of the participants.

**... specific improvement measures?**

Follow-up question

**If yes, do you have any examples?**

## ... specific improvement measures?

Answers 2019

**"Every participant of the Learning Journey has started (partly already implemented) his own projects in the plant with the knowledge from Japan. The effects in Euros as well as in culture are excellent."**

**"Improvement programme with award ceremonies."**

**"The focus was put on occupational safety"**

## **... specific improvement measures?**

Answers 2019

**"One of our participating plants has put some of the suggestions directly into practice."**

**"Savings programme worth 140 000 EUR started."**

**"Since I currently have no operational responsibility, I was only able to apply my findings in discussions and lectures, which was also very helpful and useful."**

## ... specific improvement measures?

Answers 2019

**"Training series on lean for DB Systel employees; development of a team in this direction; impulses for the daily thinking behaviour of employees, e. g. through Brownbag sessions."**

**"Annual event introduced to appreciate the suggestions of direct employees"**

**"Setting up learning islands at DB LEAN Lernfabrik ['learning factory'] Leipzig"**

## ... specific improvement measures?

Answers 2019

**"CIP\* processes – processing on the shop floor,  
LCA\*\* tool developed, integrated into purchasing  
considerations ...**

**Various projects within the framework of  
Kaizen@Gaggenau accompanied".**

**"More comparable numbers, e. g. hours that  
employees get for *kaizen* activities ...  
This structured information will help."**

\*CIP: Continuous Improvement Process

\*\*LCA: Low-Cost-Automation



## ... specific improvement measures?

Answers 2019

**"OEE\* improvement (+10%) targeted in an area through workplace analysis and *kaizen* changes → project is underway and should be completed by the end of this year.**

**Exactly arrange the work on a line of two employees (through time analysis), optimise and drastically improve the plant OEE for small batch sizes → project is ongoing**

**→ all topics are discussed every second week through our 'Coaching Meetings' (2 h fixed meetings)".**

\*OEE: Overall Equipment Effectiveness

## Question 5

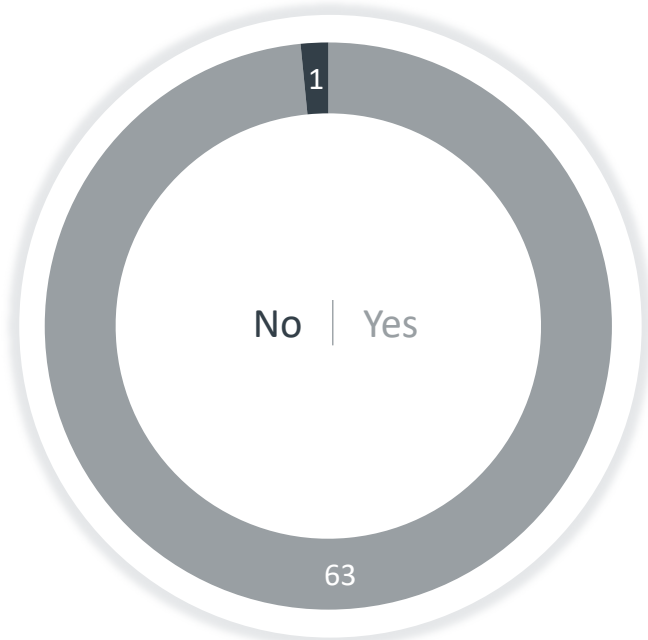
Questions about the cost-benefit ratio

**From your company's point of view, would you recommend that colleagues also participate in a Learning Journey to Japan?**

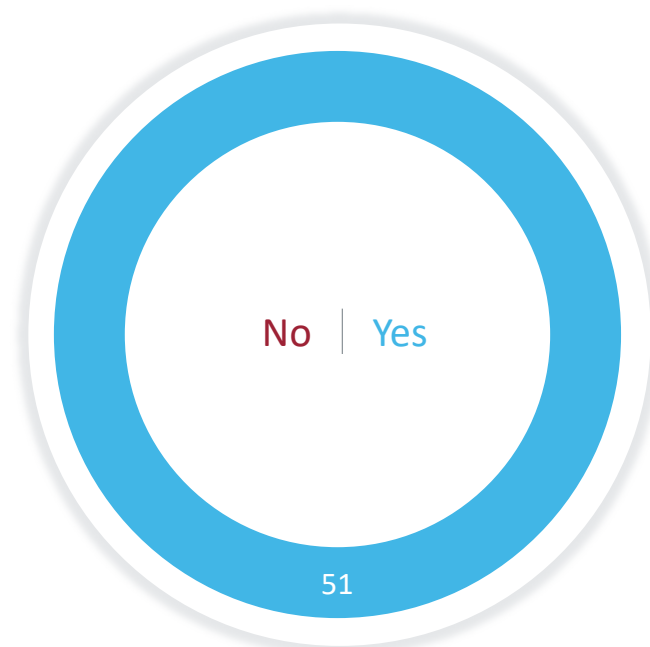
# ... recommend the Journey to colleagues?

Answers 2015 and 2019

**From your company's point of view, would you recommend the trip to colleagues?**



**2015** (64 answers)  
**98 %** of participants would recommend the Learning Journey.



**2019** (51 answers)  
**100 %** of participants would recommend the Learning Journey.

## Question 6

Question about the programme event with long-lasting effect

Is there a company visit or programme event that you remember as **particularly positive**?

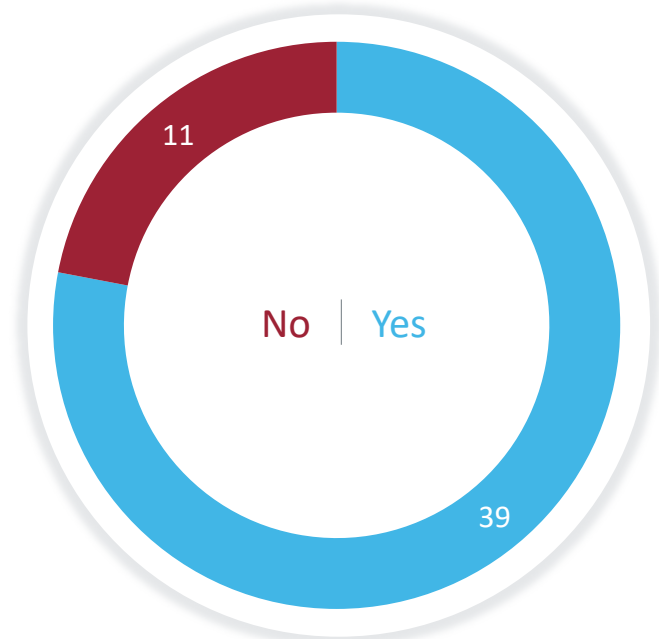
# Highlight of the Journey?

Answers 2015 and 2019

**Is there a company visit or programme event that you remember as particularly positive?**



**2015** (66 answers)  
94 % of participants recall  
a personal highlight.



**2019** (50 answers)  
78 % of participants recall  
a personal highlight.

# Highlight of the Journey?

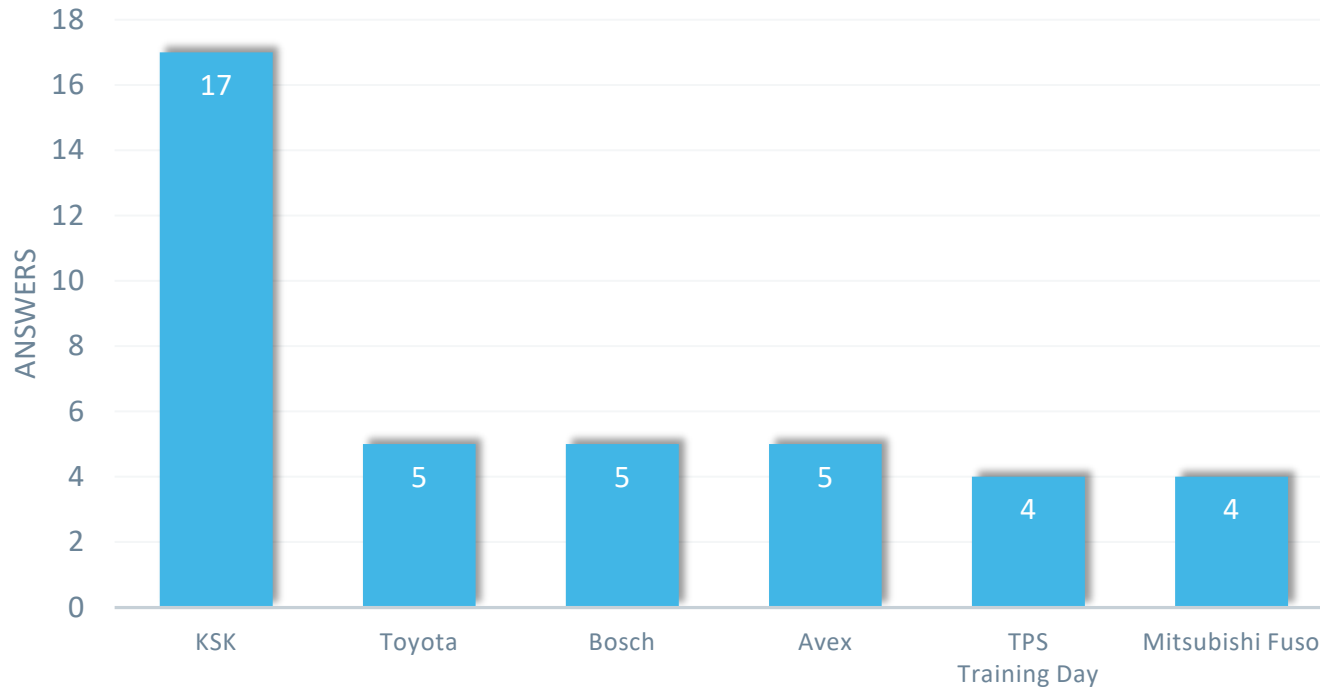
Follow-up question

**If yes, what was it and what was the reason?**

# Highlight of the Journey?

## Answers 2019

Is there a programme event that you remember particularly positively?



**2019** (multiple answers possible)

Also mentioned were DENSO (2), SUMITOMO WIRING (2), Lecture Masaaki Matsuo (2), MURATA, Toyota museum, *Kaizen* Matrix, hot springs, Nagoya castle

# Highlight of the Journey?

Answers 2019

**"AVEX: most impressive in terms of technical standardization. Strong learning transfer possible to our business."**

**"KSK and the classic CIP approach and implementation shown there were an eye-opener for me with regards to what is really possible by utilising CIP."**

**"Sumitomo Wiring ... people management"**



# Highlight of the Journey?

Answers 2019

**"In general, the combination between theory in the seminar room and practice in the companies. The truck production at Mitsubishi Fuso was particularly impressive."**

**"KSK - achieving a lot with simple means"**

**"In general, the trip in the group was perfect for exchange!"**

# Highlight of the Journey?

Answers 2019

**"KSK: Due to stringency in *kaizen* application (e. g. quality circle)**

**"BOSCH: Due to partial solutions (worries, accident awareness ...)"**

**"Ergonomic design of workplaces."**

"

# Highlight of the Journey?

Answers 2019

**"Many topics:**

- People at the centre**
- Respect**
- Quality**
- Time analysis**
- Developing machinery"**

# Highlight der Reise?

Antworten 2019

**"Old Boys: Very vivid demonstration of how relatively easy it is to bring about improvements when you take your time and look at things from different angles.  
BOSCH: Very structured company, insane love of order, super logistics. Toyota, KSK, Fuso, Shinkansen, the Nagoya castle, Nagoya, Tokyo, traditional hotel, guided city tour on the 52nd floor, Metro, the team of Dr Ditzer (perfection) ⇒ everything awesome and a crazy experience!"**

\*'Old Boys' refers to the trainers at TPS TRAINING DAY.

## Question 7

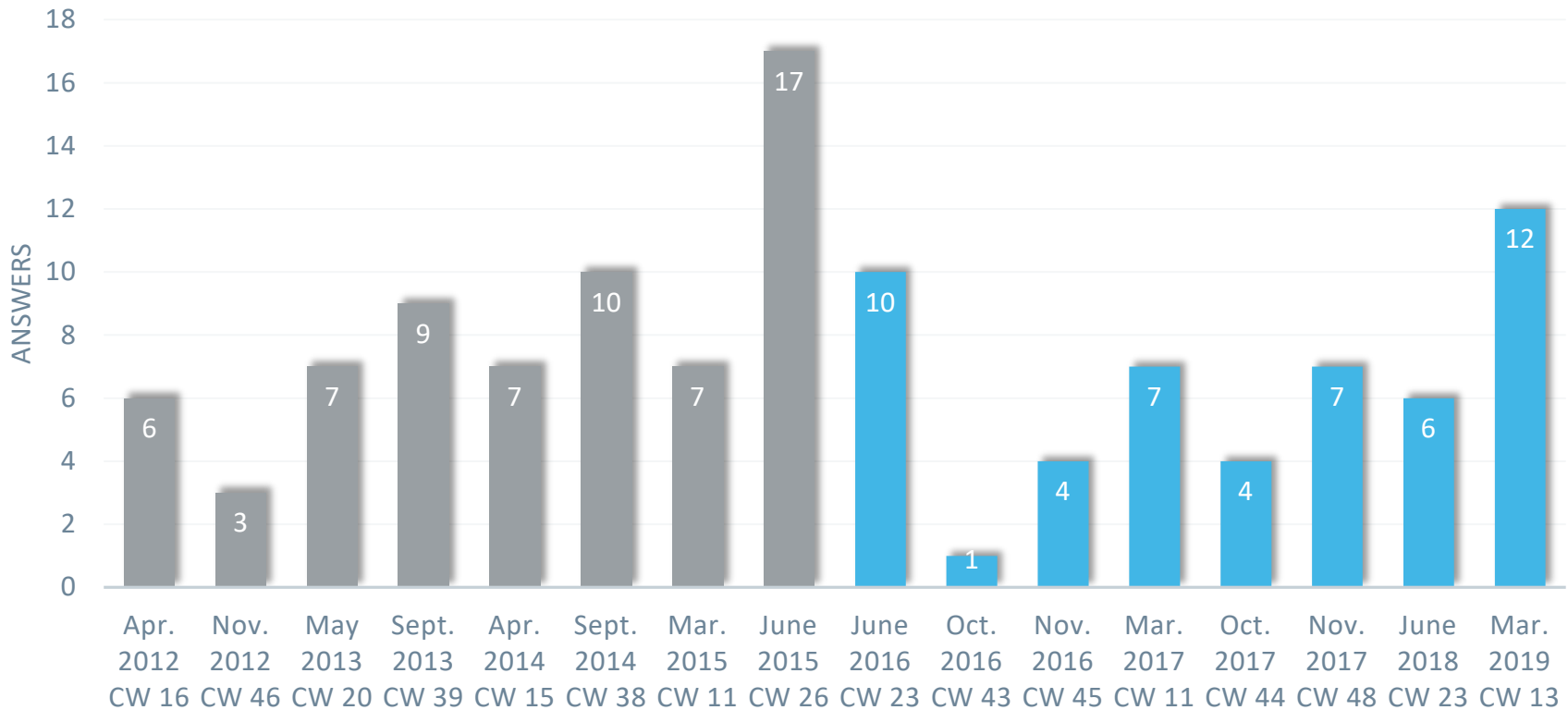
Questions about the survey participants

**Which Learning Journey did you participate in?**

# About the participants of the survey

## Answers 2015 and 2019

### Which Learning Journey did you participate in?



CW: calender week

## Question 8

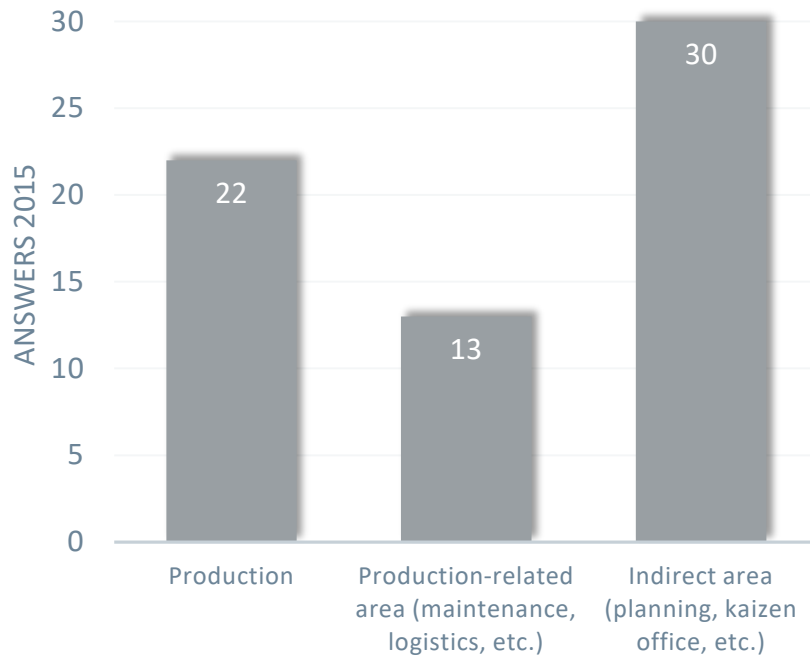
Questions about the survey participants

**In which division of your company are you currently working?**

# About the participants of the survey

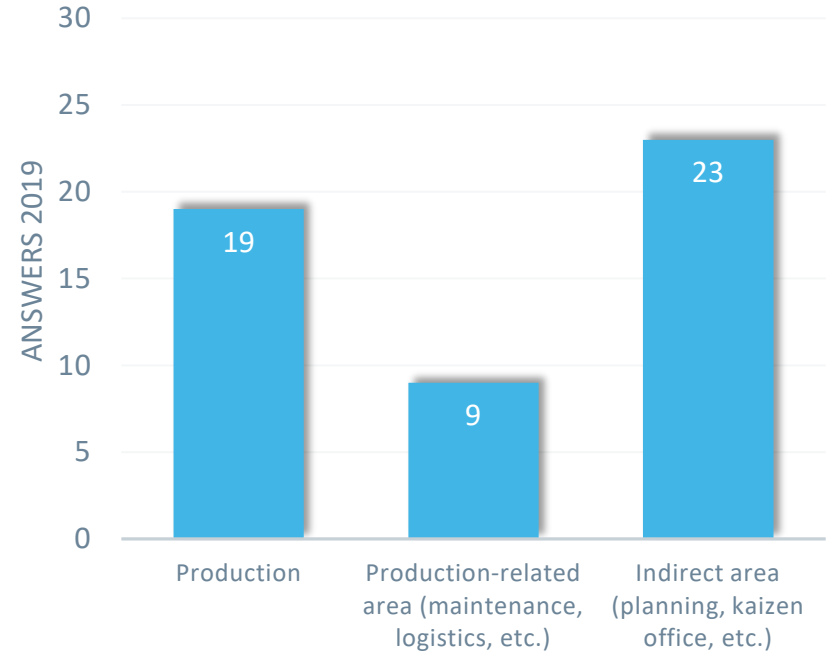
## Answers 2015 and 2019

### In which division of your company are you currently working?



**2015** (65 answers)

**Almost half** of the feedback came from participants working in **indirect areas**.



**2019** (51 answers)

**Almost half** of the feedback came from participants working in **indirect areas**.



## Question 9

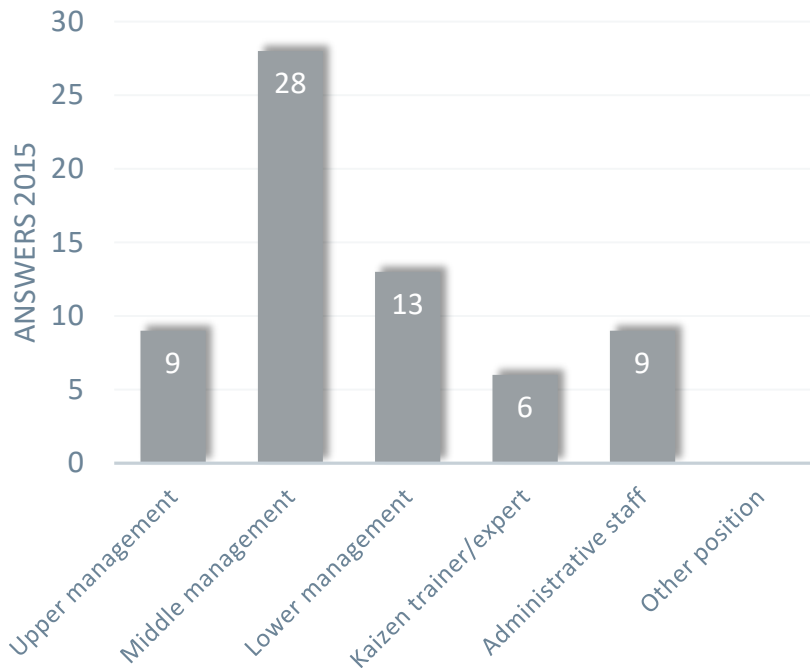
Questions about the survey participants

**What is your current position in the company?**

# About the participants of the survey

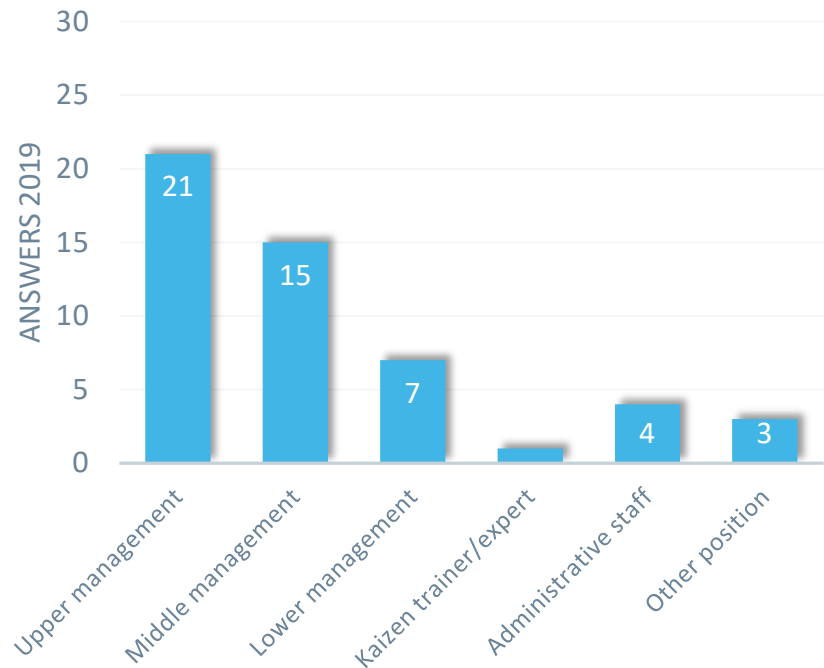
## Answers 2015 and 2019

### What is your current position in the company?



**2015** (64 answers)

The **majority** of our participants are **managers**.



**2019** (51 Antworten)

The **majority** of our participants are **managers**.

# Summary of the Online Surveys 2015 and 2019

Transfer and implementation of insights takes place.

## The Learning Journeys have benefited participants and companies:

- The inspiration from Japan has led to changes in the way leaders think and act. Specific mention was given to:
  - **Stronger integration** and **more communication** with employees
- Experiences gathered during the journey were transferred to one's own area. Specific improvement measures were implemented:
  - **Consistent transfer** and **implementation** after return has led to good effects in Euros, as well as in terms of culture
- The participants confirmed: The **cost-benefit ratio for the company is good** and it makes sense to provide this opportunity to other colleagues.
- The participants continue to look back on their personal highlights. Especially the company KSK has been remembered positively by many.

# Learning Journeys to the Sources of Excellence

## Concept of the Japan Seminars

Benchmark Training Journeys to Japan:

### 'Lean Production and Leadership – Operational Excellence in Japanese Companies'

Concept:

- One day in Germany/Europe: **thorough introduction** to the philosophy and management tools of lean production, one-day preparatory seminar
- Eight days in Japan: exclusive **insight into the practice** of selected flagship companies – directly on-site in Japan
- The seminar focuses on two areas: The **application of lean production** and the associated **leadership style**
- Qualified **evaluation** of what has been seen and the **transfer** of findings via intensive individual and group work

**Ultimately, the only thing that counts is what you go on to implement in your own company.**

# Learning Journeys to the Sources of Excellence

Nothing is more inspirational than successful role models.

RD interlogue organises seminar trips on the topics of Lean Management, Lean Production, and *Kaizen*.

For more information, please visit  
[www.rdinterlogue.com/en/japan\\_seminar](http://www.rdinterlogue.com/en/japan_seminar)

Dr Roman Ditzer

Hamburg Office

RD interlogue  
St. Annenufer 5, c/o K16  
20457 Hamburg  
[www.rdinterlogue.com](http://www.rdinterlogue.com)

Japan Office

RD interlogue Ltd.  
[www.interlogue.co.jp](http://www.interlogue.co.jp)



# RD interlogue

Journeys to the Sources of Excellence