

Taylor and Toyota – two ways of measuring a human being

Upcoming episode

Scientific management and the Toyota Production System side by side: Taylor's stopwatch, the fabricated story of Schmidt, Toyota's andon cord, how extreme both systems really are – and what separates them.

MAIN TOPICS

- Taylor, the stopwatch and the one best way
- The story of Schmidt and the pig iron
- What happened when somebody actually checked it
- Watertown, the strike and the hearings
- Toyota, and the opposite premise
- The andon cord and the right to stop everything
- How extreme TPS actually is
- The criticism – management by stress

QUESTIONS THIS EPISODE ANSWERS

- What is scientific management?
- Who was Schmidt, and what did he do?
- Were Taylor's figures real?
- What is the Toyota Production System?
- What is an andon cord?
- What is the difference between Taylor and Toyota?
- Is lean just a kinder form of Taylorism?

KEY POINTS

- Taylor measured work with a stopwatch and determined the one best way to do it.
- The story of Schmidt going from 12.5 to 47 tonnes of pig iron is the founding tale of scientific management.
- When researchers went back to the sources, the story turned out to be partly fabricated.
- Taylor removed the revolt and the mass dismissals when he retold the episode to Congress.
- Toyota inverts the premise: the worker is the source of improvement, not its object.
- The andon cord gives every individual the right to stop the whole line.
- Both systems measure work down to seconds. The difference is who holds the watch.

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

- Frederick Winslow Taylor – The Principles of Scientific Management (1911)

- Wikipedia – Schmidt (worker), on Henry Noll and the source criticism of Taylor's account
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schmidt_\(worker\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schmidt_(worker))
- Taylorism and the Workers at Bethlehem Steel, 1898–1901 (Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography)
<https://journals.psu.edu/pmhb/article/download/43387/43108>
- James P. Womack, Daniel T. Jones and Daniel Roos – The Machine That Changed the World (1990)

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