



**Event:** GEMBA Walk at DragonMead Brewery  
**Speakers:** Larry Channel  
**Date:** January 24, 2014  
**Location:** DragonMead Brewery in Warren, MI  
**We want to thank DragonMead Brewery  
For their generosity for sponsoring this fantastic event!**



The Michigan Lean Consortium (MLC) partnered with DragonMead Brewery on January 24, 2014 for a GEMBA Walk and a good time with Larry Channel from DragonMead in Warren.

Larry Channel began by telling the DragonMead story and his experience in starting and running a successful business while participants were encouraged to get a beer. Channel has been a staple in the brewery world for years and shared his wisdom. He also took attendees on a GEMBA walk of the entire brewery from the grain room to where the beer is made and bottled to a special wine room where they also make their own wine.

Many attendees had a personal relationship with Channel and a love for his brewery. For example, Mark Krebs, an attendee, witnessed his daughter getting engaged at DragonMead.

Approximately 20 people attended this event in Warren.



## Speaker Bio:



Larry began a working career in a small prototype Electro Plating plant while in high school. He continued working there through college (MSU '76 Chemistry). After college he began a corporate career at Chrysler (in his minor, data processing, not Chemistry). In his early time at Chrysler he earned a Masters from CMU in business through their extension programs.

Always in search of new challenges Larry worked his way up through a host of operations areas from Trainee thru Department Manager and beyond. In literally each of these areas he was called on to implement whatever new process improvement was being pushed but was generally ignored by his overworked peer group. This included implementing:

- New and quicker programming languages
- Large scale systems development methodologies
- Corporate Quality Improvement
- Corporate Process Improvement
- Kaizen
- Six Sigma
- Corporate Visioning

The key in each according to Larry was to achieve some success quickly. The quicker any improvement is in place the sooner the lives of everyone involved improves. Begin with yourself and the people who report to you. As soon as you achieve a workload reduction take the people/hours freed up and put it into the next project immediately.

Throughout his corporate career Larry was always searching for a business to begin. The goal was to develop a business that would have the opportunity to survive for multiple generations. After rejecting a number of potential industries he ended up starting Dragonmead Brewery in 1997.

While preparing to leave Chrysler for full time in brewing he was asked if he would take on one more task before leaving. That task was working with various Hospitals and Insurance companies to vastly reduce the time a patient must spend before being treated. He stayed on a few more years but on April Fool's day of 2001 he retired and spent the last 12 years at the brewery.

Dragonmead is the world's highest variety brewery and winner of five medals in the World Beer Cup. The World Beer Cup is like the Olympics. Every brewery can compete and it's held every other year. Dragonmead also holds the record for the highest volume nano brewery in the world with a volume five times higher than the second highest nano brewery. With the tiniest system in the state it still produces in the top 10% volume wise of all 139 state breweries.



In November of 2013 Dragonmead added a second brew system seven times bigger than the original and left the ranks of nano brewery.

Larry is an avid boater sailing over 180 times in 2013 including his annual Thanksgiving sail through the ice. He's also a member of The Players theater group writing plays and acting (think Monty Python as you see the picture), and the Detroit Racquets Club (playing the game of racquets is like hitting a golf ball with a tennis racquet in a concrete room). Other associations include being the Fleet Captain for Sail at the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club and the President of the Sociable Scoundrels.

[See photos from the event on Facebook.](#)

The mission of the MLC is to offer a diverse network of knowledgeable lean professionals who come together to share innovative practices. The organization aims to create a lean culture in Michigan to ensure sustainable competitive advantage, which could translate into healthier businesses that offer more job opportunities leading to economic growth in the state.