

# Isaac B. Mitchell

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Website

**Current Position and Company.** Isaac is Director of Lean Continuous Improvement at East Tennessee Children's Hospital in Knoxville, TN. He has been in healthcare for the past six years.

**Education History.** Isaac received his MBA from Xavier University and his BS in Industrial Engineering from the University of Tennessee. He also completed his Six Sigma Black Belt and Lean Black Belt from the Institute of Industrial Engineers (IIE).

**Co-op Experience.** Isaac completed an undergraduate co-op at Sea Ray Boats. This provided him a great experience bridging course work to real world industry applications. More importantly, it prepared him for work life after college. He learned about being part of a team, work expectations both known and unknown, and how to communicate effectively with a variety of people with difference backgrounds and experiences.

**Toyota Production System.** Isaac began his career with his sights set on manufacturing. During undergrad, Isaac read everything he could about Toyota Productions Systems. He set out to learn firsthand from Toyota at their North America Engineering and Manufacturing headquarters in Kentucky. This experience let him see TPS in action. He became increasingly interested in the application of lean and industrial engineering tools to improve healthcare. In 2009, he joined East Tennessee Children's Hospital implementing lean methodologies to improve patient outcomes, family experiences, and provider work environments for the better.

**Reason for Healthcare.** His passion for working in healthcare is driven by the need for improvement in safety, quality, and value. There are too many stories about avoidable unplanned medical harm. Everyone has been affected by this medical harm be it through personal experiences, family members, or friends. In 2007, Jim Womack was quoted "Not too many people are killed by defective cars anymore... fixing this in healthcare is a moral obligation." We know that lean continuous improvement works and it has been proven. Our role as industrial engineers is to apply these tools and methodology to the next industry need, healthcare.

**Three Prong Approach.** Lean at East Tennessee Children's Hospital consists of three main functions:

daily continuous improvement, project work, and lean management systems. The big focus is engaging every staff member in improvement work in order to provide ideal patient care. His time is spent coaching front-line staff and management through A3 problem solving. Isaac supports improvements by

providing the tools, resources, and environment for sustainable change. One of his biggest joys at work is seeing empowered employees solve reoccurring problems to improve the patient experience. He also works on large scale projects including facility design, lead time reduction, and improving patient safety through process reliability.

**Society for Health Systems (SHS) Involvement.** Isaac has been involved with IIE since he was a student. He served as student President and planned/hosted a student regional conference (a great chance to test his project management skills). When he entered healthcare, Isaac immediately joined SHS and got involved. He has presented at SHS conferences and held numerous leadership roles including Moderator, Reviewer, Track Chair, and Day Coordinator. He is currently serving on the SHS Board of Directors.

**Why SHS?** One of the biggest benefits of SHS is the networking with colleagues from across the country working towards common goals. The SHS network is filled with experienced professionals practicing and implementing healthcare process improvement daily. This vast experience creates a rich knowledge based for each SHS member to share and learn. The Health Systems Process Improvement Conference is one of the best events of the year. It is great to see old friends, catch up on what has happened over the past year, make new connections, and see new innovations. The conference is a great time to showcase project work and get feedback and new ideas from peers.

**Other Hobbies and Involvement.** Isaac has chaired East Tennessee Children's Hospital's fundraising for United Way of Greater Knoxville raising an average of \$63,000 a year that goes directly to local agencies' needs.

