Management expert James P. Womack, Ph.D., is the founder and senior advisor to the Lean Enterprise Institute, Inc., a nonprofit training, publishing, conference, and management research company chartered in August 1997 to advance a set of ideas known as lean production and lean thinking, based initially on Toyota’s business system and now being extended to an entire lean management system.


Womack received a B.A. in political science from the University of Chicago in 1970, a master's degree in transportation systems from Harvard in 1975, and a Ph.D. in political science from MIT in 1982 (for a dissertation on comparative industrial policy in the U.S., Germany, and Japan). During the period 1975-1991, he was a full-time research scientist at MIT directing a series of comparative studies of world manufacturing practices. As research director of MIT’s International Motor Vehicle Program, Womack led the research team that coined the term “lean production” to describe Toyota’s business system.

Jim Womack served as the Institute’s chairman and CEO from 1997 until 2010 when he was succeeded by John Shook.