

WORKPLACE ORGANIZATION (Lean Succeeds in a Clean, Organized Workplace)

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The workplace environment is important in helping to introduce Lean principles. An untidy or disorganized workplace can lead to wasted energy, whether it be avoiding obstacles or searching for materials and tools. It can also lead to increases in the chance of machinery failures, delays due to defects, and even accidents. Many companies today are working on the 5S system that consists of effective workplace organization and standard work procedures that are favorable to Lean principles.

5S System

The 5S philosophy focuses on simplifying the work environment, reducing waste, and improving quality and safety. The system includes:

- **Sorting/Eliminating materials** that do not belong on the workplace floor such as broken tools, obsolete materials, and excess raw materials.
- **Storage/Eliminating time** wasted in looking for things. Creating proper storage containers helps create an environment with a place for everything and everything in its place.
- **Shining/Cleaning** not only improves the overall efficiency of the workplace, but also creates in workers a sense of pride and ownership in the facility.
- **Standardizing** to make all work areas as similar and efficient as possible. Workers are encouraged to share their best practices with those in other areas.
- **Sustaining/Internalizing** the rules and making them habits so workers do not slide back to the old way of doing things.

Benefits of Lean

The benefits of Lean cannot succeed in a workplace that is cluttered, disorganized, or dirty. Poor workplace conditions lead to wastes such as extra motion to avoid obstacles, time spent searching for things, and delays due to defects, machine failures, or accidents. Establishing basic workplace conditions is an essential first step in creating a pleasant and efficient place to work.

Motivating Employees

Job satisfaction increases when a work area is clean, tidy, and tools are organized. The frustration level drops and satisfaction in doing a good job increases. The employee must be involved by knowing what the goals are and they are a part of the team in attaining these goals.

People working on a job frequently know the problems, irritations or bottlenecks. It is rewarding to know that their opinions or suggestions are valued.

Company Focus

The goal of any business or industry is to satisfy the existing customers and find new ones by building and maintaining a *reputation* in their field of expertise by offering cost-effective and high-quality solutions to complex problems. Although most customers have specific needs, they all have some common requirements. Finding these common requirements and satisfying them in a timely and efficient manner is the cornerstone of maintaining existing customers and finding new ones.

All customers, regardless of business or industry, are interested in the essentials of being *listened to and understood*, being shown *respect*, being kept *informed*, and in receiving *superior value*. To achieve this goal, a company must *continually improve* its people, processes, products, and facilities. They must be dedicated to training, educating, and involving employees in customer satisfaction.

The Importance of Customer Care

Good customer care matters because keeping existing customers is easier than finding new ones, and satisfied customers will do a lot of good advertising for the company. Most people consider doing business with a certain company because of a recommendation of a former customer or acquaintance. Dissatisfied customers spread the bad news and undermine the business that eventually can threaten everyone's jobs.

Keeping Customers for Life

The Harvard Business School reported in 2000 that if a company can increase its customer retention from 90 to 95%, pre-tax profits could reach up to 45%. A key impetus for customers to continue working with a company is for them to receive superior customer care. The following five tips are offered to improve customer relationship management strategy:

- Appoint someone to look after the company's customer care program.

- Share customer information between departments so they are aware of customer service issues and inquiries; each department can serve customers with speed and accuracy.
- Know the customer; research the customers' requirements and identify and follow up with the most profitable customers.
- Continually review the customer service efforts to determine what works. What is right for one company may not be right for another.

Creating Ideas

It seems that we must occasionally rekindle the spirit of learning. A positive vision of the future is so important for everyone who wishes to make a difference and see the company succeed in this competitive world. Managers or supervisors know there is nothing more rewarding than to get people to recognize their potential, become involved in the improvement process, and be excited about their work.

To have the power of vision for the future, each person must have a real goal or something important for which to reach. Management must create an atmosphere of continuous improvement by changing a person's view, changing the process, or changing the way of thinking to make something better or for something to get better. The key to the future is education whether it comes from on the job or formal education; everyone must be knowledgeable about the changes that affect their jobs. Share new knowledge with fellow workers, supervisors, and other who may have a similar vision; keep in mind that vision with action can change the world.