

Lean Manufacturing

Quick Start Guide to 5S Methodology

Samuel Greengard | Mar 01, 2017

What You Need to Know

[Find out why 5S is the cornerstone of lean manufacturing.](#)

[Implement 5S to arrange your workspace to eliminate waste.](#)

[Discover how to utilize this lean manufacturing methodology in your shop today.](#)

Tips to introduce this useful practice into your shop.

Originally developed in Japan during the 1970s as part of the radical “just-in-time” manufacturing technique, 5S is the cornerstone of lean manufacturing. The workplace organizational methodology encourages the idea that excellence can be achieved through visual order, attention to detail, cutting waste and putting everything in its allotted place.

“5S provides the foundation for effective and efficient work processes by ensuring that only the required items (material, information, tools, supplies) are in the work area,” says Douglas Jones, executive vice president of MSC Industrial Supply Co. “Once all of the nonrequired items are removed, an associate can complete their processes without having to leave the work area to locate and bring items back. This builds the discipline needed to sustain the work area and prevent unnecessary items from creeping back in.”

Want to implement 5S methodology at your company? Jones offers some advice on how to get started:

Step 1

Identify the benefits and determine to what degree your company needs to increase standards of quality by lowering costs, improving safety, decreasing manufacturing time or reducing inventory.

Step 2

Assess your culture and operations to decide how best to introduce 5S methodology and perhaps other lean concepts. Regardless of title or position, employees across various levels and functions should feel empowered to examine their individual and collective work processes to develop a strategy for implementing the methodology. Once you define what it is you are trying to achieve, tailor it for your company.

Step 3

Identify opportunities for waste reduction and efficiency gains by analyzing the amount of materials used, production time, additional movement on the floor if tools, machines and workers are improperly stationed, and the ease in the flow of information. This includes identifying the potential value and

gains throughout the process. Also, don't just copy what other companies are doing; come up with a plan that best fits your organization.

Step 4

Implement the 5S methodology and evaluate your results. How much time and money are wasted on just searching for items on the shop floor every day? Invest in storage containers, label makers and displays of your 5S audit. Not only is the objective to uncover challenges, errors or problems and create a culture where you can quickly find solutions, but also to sustain this ongoing process. Don't let the idea of being "perfect" get in the way of being "better," so focus on the smaller, incremental improvements first.

Understanding 5S Manufacturing

Learn how to organize your workspace and eliminate waste using this lean manufacturing methodology:



Sort

Remove unnecessary items and use only what you need—materials, information, tools and supplies—within the work area. Sorting also reduces the presence of excess inventory, thus making the replenishment of items much faster and easier.



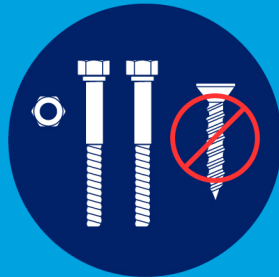
Straighten

Coordinate and designate items in a way that is visibly appealing and effortlessly accessible. This reduces time and defects in products by making sure a workplace is neatly organized and that there is a “home for everything.”



Shine

Keep your work area, tools and equipment clean and clutter-free to ensure top performance and employee safety. The process helps workers build the discipline required to sustain the work area, return items to their “homes” after use and prevent unnecessary items from creeping in.



Standardize

Create a definition of value for what is normal work behavior and apply solutions when the abnormal ensues. This can be applied to any facility, regardless of the type of manufacturing environment and the technology used.



Sustain

Train managers and employees to identify when work area organization issues occur and then empower them to implement solutions and ensure the principles are being followed. Organizations can also hire outside consultants to assist.

Final Thought

“Some organizations look to tackle all of the stages at once, others choose to progress from one to the next. Both approaches can deliver success. The key is to choose what works best for your organization.”—Douglas Jones, Executive Vice President, MSC Industrial Supply Co.

Illustration by T.M. Detwiler

www.mscdirect.com/betterMRO

Copyright ©2024 MSC Industrial Supply Co.