



5S / CAN DO

Overview

5S is about workplace organisation. It is a major pillar of lean operations in that it helps create a workplace (and workforce) that is ready for a lean operations deployment. It is a 5-step process to creating competitive advantage from a safe, clean and organised workplace. It is applicable to virtually any working environment.

5S is:

- Sort - sorting out useful items and discarding unwanted items. This gets rid of clutter, reduces potential hazards and releases additional space at work.
- Set - “a place for everything and everything in its place”. Storing things (materials, information, tools etc) properly so that they do not spoil, deteriorate or become damaged and unusable and being able to find them when required are all part of the “set” activities.
- Shine - “clean and keep clear”. A clean working environment boosts morale but also enhances safety as problem, hazards and dangers can be spotted clearly.
- Standardise - by standardising work practices and procedures, it is possible to build consistency in the outputs, which is the key to maintaining quality and customer satisfaction.
- Sustain - both the organisation and the individual need to sustain the gains of the Sort / Set / Shine / Standardise through continuous improvement.

Origins of 5S

5S came from Toyota and the original 5S words are in Japanese. These Japanese words all start with an “s” sound - hence 5S.

With different interpretations of the Japanese language and perhaps a desire to avoid the Japanese link, there is a plethora of definitions of 5S. Some of the most common ones are shown below.

Original Japanese	5S#1	5S#2	5C	"Can Do"
Seri	Sort	Sorting	Clear Out	Arrange
Seiton	Set	Simplifying Access	Configure	Neatness
Seiso	Shine	Sweeping	Clean & Check	Cleanliness
Seiketsu	Standardise	Standardising	Conformity	Order
Shitsuki	Sustain	Self Discipline	Custom & Practice	Discipline

(Note: The two 5S definitions shown above were from Productivity Press Inc.)

It is of interest to note that "Can Do" only works as a phrase if you are an English speaker and appreciate the nuances of "Can Do". Other nationalities are as likely to use "ANCOD" - the letter arrangement of the acronym makes much more sense!

Deploying 5S

There is a sequence to deploying 5S (and not just the 5-letter sequences of the Ss).

- Planning - organise, liaise, train, plan activities
- Evaluating the work area and set targets - assess current performance and set sensible measures and targets
- Carry out 5S activities - Sort / Set / Shine / Standardise / Sustain, the first three to be carried out first and in sequence and the final two can be carried out in some degree of concurrency
- Measure results - qualitative (before / after photos and opinions) and quantitative (amount of waste generated etc) results
- Maintain the momentum - marketing and communications to the workforce through progress reports and celebrating achievements

The deployment is therefore not a quick series of actions, but a planned strategy that requires budget and scheduling.

Issues with 5S

5S is not without some difficulties, for example, standardising practices can stifle innovations. The "Sort" activity can upset some people because they need to justify why something is needed. The "Clean and keep Clear" activity can upset the slobbers at work. To sustain the "Sustain" activity, a reward system or some sort of motivation package is needed.

Since 5S is an on-going activity rather than a one-off initiative, this means a company cannot get the full benefits by just "doing" 5S and then start a different initiative. 5S is best deployed as part of the general operations regime.

Resources

The Lean Enterprise Institute: <http://www.lean.org>

The Lean Enterprise Academy: <http://www.leanuk.org>

Ohno, T., The Toyota Production System, Productivity Press 1988

Hirano, H., 5S for Operators, Productivity Press 1996