

5S Event Guidelines

Basic Lean Management Course

Planning

The purpose of the 5S event is to try out the 5S organizing technique on a specific workspace. This could be a physical workspace like an office area, a file room, or a storage closet. It could also be a “virtual workspace” like an email server (Microsoft Outlook) or a collaborative platform (Slack.)

The 5S event involves selecting a target workspace and then applying the five S-steps to that space (see below.) The first three Ss - Sort, Straighten and Scrub – will be completed in Week 3 and then the last two Ss – Standardize, Sustain – will be completed in Week 4.

The target workspace should be chosen so that the first three Ss can be completed in one session lasting no more than about four hours. Individuals who use that target workspace should participate in the event to the extent possible.

Execution

The five S steps are as follows:

1) Sort (separate)

Sort physical or virtual items into similar groups: for example, keep, give-away/repurpose, discard. Beware of discarding items that may be needed by non-participating users. If you’re not sure whether or not to discard an item, use “red-tagging” where you put a prominent tag on the item with a future discard date.

2) Straighten (organize)

Put the remaining items into some sort of order with certain items in certain spaces. While this step may reflect some improvements, don’t spend much time debating about ways of organizing the space. Remember “Just do it, then improve it.”

3) Scrub (shine, clean)

Actually removing dirt and debris and physically cleaning the space is important. This also applies to scrubbing the virtual space where, for example, folder names might be changed and/or files might be deleted.

4) Standardize (systematize, optimize)

In this step, the workspace is re-organized with visual controls and other improvements (e.g. work cells.)

5) Sustain

This step will continue beyond the initial event and should involve explicit ways of keeping things in order such as a 5S audit or “5S day.” After the initial event is completed, an “after” picture should be taken and posted in the space as a visual control to guide users in sustaining the standard.