

3. 5-S

Introduction to 5-S

The 5-S practice is a technique used to establish and maintain quality environment in an organisation. The name stands for five Japanese words : *Seiri*, *Seiton*, *Seiso*, *Seiketsu* and *Shitsuke* (Osada, 1991). The English equivalent, their meanings and typical examples are shown in the following table:

| JAPANESE | ENGLISH | MEANING | TYPICAL EXAMPLE |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Seiri</i> | Structure | Organisation | Throw away rubbish |
| <i>Seiton</i> | Systematic | Neatness | 30-second retrieval of a document |
| <i>Seiso</i> | Sanitise | Cleaning | Individual cleaning responsibility |
| <i>Seiketsu</i> | Standardise | Standardisation | Transparency of storage |
| <i>Shitsuke</i> | Self-discipline | Discipline | Do 5-S daily |

The 5-S technique has been widely practiced in Japan. Most Japanese 5-S practitioners consider 5-S useful not just for improving their physical environment, but also for improving their thinking processes too. Apparently the 5-S can help in all stratas of life. Many of the everyday problems could be solved through adoption of this practice. Unfortunately, unlike other quality tools and techniques, this basic but powerful technique for quality improvement has not been known to the western world. More detailed discussion of 5-S will be found in the next Chapter.

5-S in Detail

The following sections will explain each of the constituents of the 5-S practice in appropriate depth to enable practitioners to get the maximum benefit from its implementation, yet not making it too complicated to understand.

- What is Organisation (Seiri) ?
- What is Neatness (Seiton) ?
- What is Cleaning (Seiso) ?
- What is Standardisation (Seiketsu) ?
- What is Discipline (Shitsuke) ?

How to Implement the 5-S ?

5-S implementation requires commitment from both the top management and everyone in the organization. It is also important to have a 5-S Champion to lead the whole organization towards

5-S implementation step-by-step. If you decide to be the 5-S Champion of your organization, the following steps will help you to achieve success.

Step 1: Top Management Commitment and Preparedness

You have to sell the idea of the 5-S to the most senior executive of your organization. Moreover, and like any other quality programme, it is no good to get just his lip-service. She needs to be 100% committed; not just in announcing the start of the 5-S practice in the promoting campaign, but committed to give resources for training and improvements. Then you need to get prepared yourself.

In promoting the 5-S activities, the important thing is to do them one at a time and to do each thoroughly. Even the little things have to be taken seriously if they are to make any meaningful impact. This process can be stratified as follows :

1. Make a decision and implement it (e.g., the decision to get rid of everything you do not need, the decision to have a major housecleaning, and the decision to have 5-minute clean-up periods).
2. Make tools and use them (e.g., special shelves and stands for things, instructional labels, and placement figures).
3. Do things that demand improvements as prerequisites (e.g., covers to prevent filings from scattering and measures to prevent leakage).
4. Do things that require help from other departments (e.g., fixing defective machinery, changing the layout, and preventing oil leakage).

Step 2: Draw up a Promotional Campaign

The first thing to do for a promotion campaign is to set up a timetable. In general, the plan can be broken down into 10 key activities:

1. Get top-management commitment, assess status -quo and establish implementation plan.
2. 5-S Workshop for 5-S Facilitators – based on the 5-S Audit Worksheet in Annex.4.1, identify the key 5-S activities, one from each of the 5-S for the first cycle of implementation.
3. 1st 5-S Day – Organization (e.g., Throw away things you do not need.)
4. Daily 5-S activities by everyone.
5. 2nd 5-S Day – Neatness (e.g. , Name everything and assign locations.)
6. 3rd 5-S Day – Cleaning (e.g, All-together housecleaning)
7. 4th 5-S Day – Standardization (visual management & transparency for things)
8. 5th 5-S Day – Discipline (e.g., Do your own 5-S Audit)
9. Grand Prize Presentation for the best 5-S department/section
10. Review and plan for next 5-S Campaign.

Step 3 : Keeping Records

It is important to keep records not only of decisions made but also of the problems encountered, actions taken and results achieved. Only if past practice has been recorded people will have a sense of progress and improvement over time. There are a number of tools for keeping records, these are:

1. Log Books
2. Photographs
3. Videos
4. Quantification
5. Museum Room

Step 4 : 5-S Training

The 5-S activities are all directed at eliminating waste and effecting continuous improvement in the work place. Right from the beginning there will seem to be lots of 5-S activities to be done. As you go on, you will notice that there are always additional 5-S problems to solve. They are not insurmountable, though, if considered and solved one at a time.

It is essential in the 5-S activities that you train people to be able to devise and implement their own solutions. Progress that is not self-sustaining – progress that always has to rely upon outside help - is not real progress. It is important that your people know, for example, how to use the computer to do charts and graphs, even if it is not part of their job description. They need to study maintenance techniques. And oddly enough, the more problems they are capable of solving, the more problems they will spot.

Training should also include section-wide or company-wide meetings where people can announce their results. Not only does this provide incentive, but also the exchange of ideas and information is often just what you need to keep everybody fresh.

Step 5 : Evaluation

As with so many other things, it is very easy to get into a routine with 5-S activities – particularly because they demand constant everyday attention to routine details. At the same time, because the individual tasks appear minor even though they have great cumulative impact, it is easy to think that you can put them off. Everybody is busy, and it is difficult to make alert 5-S activities a part of the daily routine. Workplace evaluations and other means are needed to keep everyone abreast of what is happening and to spot problems before develop into major complications. In essence, you need to devise ways that will get everybody competing in a friendly but no less intense manner. Your evaluation tools are the keys and it is as simple as using the 5-S Audit Worksheet as your evaluation criteria.

Patrols and Cross-evaluations

Two other techniques that you can adopt to promote the 5-S activities are patrols and cross-evaluations. Patrols can go around to the various workshops and offices and point out problems. This is similar to “managing by walking around”, but the patrol members do not even need to be management personnel. They simply need to know what to look for and have the authority to point out problems that need to be worked on. They simply need to know what questions to ask.

Cross-evaluations are variations on this theme in that they involve having teams working on similar problems offering advice to other teams. One advantage of doing this is the exchange of ideas and mutual learning.

The objectives of the evaluation are to ensure that the 5-S implementation will lead to a conducive total quality environment.

